THE GANDHI STORY
in his own words

Condensed and Compiled by
Mahendra Meghani

From M. K. Gandhi's two books
An Autobiography
and
Satyagraha in South Africa

LOK-MILAP TRUST

To

Charles F. Andrews

(1871-1940)

The greatest interpreter of Gandhi

to the whole Western world,

beloved of both Gandhi and Tagore

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Gandhi and Tagore: two faces of modern India. It was an Englishman who was the link between these two great representatives of modern India: the ascetic and the bard. Few felt their joint impact more sensitively than the saintly Englishman, C. F. Andrews. Let him estimate them whom he loved so well:

"I have never in my whole life met anyone so completely satisfying the needs of friendship and intellectual understanding and spiritual sympathy as Tagore. Side by side with the friendship with the poet, I have had the supreme happiness of a friendship with Mahatma Gandhi. His character, in his own way, is as great and as creative as that of Tagore. However, it has about it an air of religious faith of the Middle Ages rather than that of modern. Mahatma Gandhi is the St. Francis of Assissi of our own days."

Krishna Kripalani
(Author of two outstanding biographies:
Tagore: A Life and *Gandhi: A Life*)

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COMPILER'S NOTE

Romain Rolland (1866–1944), a French man of letters who received the 1915 Nobel Prize for literature, was an apostle of heroic idealism. In 1924 he produced a small volume entitled *Mahatma Gandhi*. It was one of the earliest biographies of Gandhi, and the first to be widely circulated in the Western world. He and Gandhi first met only in 1931 in Switzerland. Thereafter Rolland described Gandhi thus:

"The little man, bespectacled and toothless, so frail in appearance, is tireless, and fatigue is a word which does not exist in his vocabulary. His thought is in constant evolution. The seeker after truth hath a heart tender as the lotus, and hard as granite."

What Romain Rolland did in Europe was accomplished in the New World by John H. Holmes, minister of the Community Church in New York. He was the very first to make the name of Gandhi known and loved in America. Gandhi's autobiography was first published in America, in serial form, in *Unity* magazine, edited by Holmes. In 1953 he wrote in the book *My Gandhi*:

"Gandhi was a great and wonderful man. Where was there anybody to match him in our troubled and wicked world? Did he not hold in his heart the secret of man's deliverance from the evils threatening to destroy him? Must he not be proclaimed the compeer of the greatest men of our own or any other time?"

Following Rolland and Holmes many other biographies of Gandhi have been written by others in India and abroad, perhaps the most voluminous among them being the 10-part *Mahatma Gandhi* by his secretary Pyarelal and his sister Sushila Nayar. Among all of them a unique place is occupied by the *Autobiography* written by Gandhi himself in 1925 and translated into English by Mahadev Desai. The story in that book terminates in 1920, when Gandhi still had almost three decades of intense activity before him. However, a less-known autobiographical volume written earlier by him and translated by Valji G. Desai, *Satyagraha In South Africa*, provides greater details about Gandhi's

first experiments with non-violent direct action during the twenty-one years he was in South Africa. These two books together provide a comprehensive narration of at least nearly five first decades of his life in India, England and South Africa.

It is my earnest desire to see that the Gandhi Story as contained in these two books reaches even more people than before, especially young people all over the world.

But together they contain about 300,000 words, and it may be difficult for most people today to find the time and patience to wade through them.

I have therefore humbly attempted to condense them here in nearly 75,000 words. The first attempt in this manner was made by Bharatan Kumarappa and published as *Gandhiji's Autobiography Abridged* in 1952 (Navajivan Publishing House). Now that the copyright in Gandhiji's writings has expired at the end of 2008, I am venturing to make a fresh attempt, adding pictures to the text, in the hope that it may prove of interest to more readers.

The first edition of this book is being printed in India. But instead of it being exported to many countries we would like to see it being reprinted locally wherever possible. To facilitate this, the publishers, Lokmilap Trust, will gladly provide a CD of the book to publishers in all countries. Now that Gandhi's writings have become the property of all mankind, let us endeavor to make them widely available throughout the world.

In this condensed compilation I have not altered any word of the original text. To make the meaning clear, words have been added in brackets in some cases. Photographs have been added by courtesy of the Gandhi Memorial Museum, Ahmedabad. Glossary and Index too are additions.

The compiler would be grateful to receive comments that may make this modest book readable by more and more people.

January 30, 2009 — Mahendra Meghani

FROM THE TEMPLE TO THE MARKETPLACE

J. Swaminathan

[Abridged from the editor's preface to Vol. 39 of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* which includes *The Autobiography*.]

The bulk of the volume consists of the *Autobiography*, the most widely read of Gandhiji's works and a document of central importance in the study of his life-story. The Gujarati original appeared in weekly installments in *Navajivan* from November 29, 1925 to February 3, 1929. The English translation by Mahadev Desai, and in part by Pyarelal Nayar, Gandhiji's secretaries, appeared in *Young India* from December 3, 1925 to February 7, 1929. The task was undertaken at the instance of some coworkers, who had first made the suggestion as far back as 1921 and who renewed their pressure in 1925 when Gandhiji seemed to be relatively free from preoccupations. Well aware of the general experience that hardly any autobiography is free from egotism and the taint of untruth, conscious or unconscious, Gandhiji was reluctant to embark on the venture. He could overcome his reluctance only by giving the story the form of an objective record of his moral experiments in private and public life, narrated with scientific detachment and with the sole purpose of illustrating the application of truth in all spheres of life. Gandhiji deliberately excluded from the narrative events of purely personal significance. He left out the human side of the story which if told could have been of immense psychological interest.

The work is thus not a full or satisfying self-portrait. Nor is it a critical commentary on contemporary history. But despite these self-imposed limitations of interest, the *Autobiography* remains of supreme importance to the student of Gandhiji's inner life-story.

Gandhiji returned to India [from South Africa] with the

ambition of taking his "humble share in national regeneration". He landed in Bombay in January 1915 with his views about national affairs fully formed, though, in deference to Gokhale's wish, he did not express them publicly for one year. Explaining in the first issue of *Navajivan* (September 7, 1919) the aims of the journal, he said: "Despite these limitations of mine, I clearly see that I have something to give to India which no one else has in equal measure. With much striving I have formulated some principles for my life and put them into practice. The happiness I have found that way, I think, I have not seen in others. It is my sincere aspiration to place these principles before India and share my happiness with her." As opportunities offered themselves, Gandhiji cautiously tested these principles in securing redress of grievances.

These experiments of Gandhiji in the spiritual field, giving him increasing self-knowledge and inner strength, were the source to such power as he possessed "for working in the political field". The power consisted in an ability to raise men and women above their usual selves, to call forth and use for common good the heroic goodness inherent in all people. Gandhiji's authority throughout his long political career depended wholly on the free choice of individuals moved by "admiration, hope and love". Yet no man in history commanded such obedience from so many for so long. If conscientious practice of *dharma* confers such moral power to use the inherent goodness of the people as a force in politics, these experiments in bringing religion from the temple to the marketplace were well worth making and are well worth careful study.

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in his own words

CHILDHOOD

The Gandhis for three generations, from my grandfather, have been Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad [a region in western India] States. Uttamchand Gandhi, my grandfather, had four sons by his first wife and two by his second wife. The fifth of these six brothers was Karamchand Gandhi, my father. He married four times in succession, having lost his wife each time by death. His last wife, Putlibai, bore him a daughter and three sons, I being the youngest.

My father was truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered. To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures. But he was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict impartiality. My father never had any ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property. My mother was deeply religious. She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching.

Of these parents I was born at Porbandar on the 2nd October, 1869. I passed my childhood in Porbandar. I recollect having been put to school. I recollect nothing more of those days than having learned, in company with other boys, to call our teacher all kinds of names.

I must have been about seven when my father left Porbandar for Rajkot [both cities in Kathiawad region]. There I was put in a primary school. From this school I went to the high school, having already reached my twelfth year. I used to be very shy and avoided all company. My books and my lessons were my sole companions. To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed, that was my daily habit. I literally ran back, because I could not bear to talk to anybody. I was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me.

As a rule I had distaste for any reading beyond my school books. But somehow my eyes fell on a book purchased by my father. It was *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* (a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents). I read it with intense interest. There came to our place about the same time itinerant showmen. One of the pictures I was shown was of Shravana carrying, by means of slings fitted for his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an indelible impression on my mind. "Here is an example for you to copy," I said to myself.

Just about this time, I had secured my father's permission to see a play performed by a certain dramatic company. This play, *Harishchandra*, captured my heart. It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra [a mythological king known for his devotion to truth] to myself times without number. "Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?" was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. The thought of it all often made me weep.

It is my painful duty to have to record here my marriage [with Kasturbai] at the age of thirteen. I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with. The carnal desire came later. Two innocent children all unwittingly hurled themselves into the ocean of life. We gradually began to know each other. But I took no time in assuming the authority of a husband.

About the time of my marriage, little pamphlets costing a *pice* used to be issued, in which conjugal love, thrift, and other such subjects were discussed. Whenever I came across any of these, I used to go through them cover to cover; and it was a habit with me to forget what I did not like, and to carry out in practice whatever I liked. Lifelong faithfulness to

the wife, inculcated in these booklets as the duty of the husband, remained permanently imprinted on my heart.

But the lesson of faithfulness had also an untoward effect. "If I should be pledged to be faithful to my wife, she also should be pledged to be faithful to me," I said to myself. The thought made me a jealous husband. Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her, and I should be watchfully tenacious of the right. I had absolutely no reason to suspect my wife's fidelity, but jealousy does not wait for reasons. I must needs be for ever on the look-out regarding her movements, and therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. This sowed the seeds of a bitter quarrel between us. The restraint was virtually a sort of imprisonment. And Kasturbai was not the girl to brook any such thing. She made it a point to go out whenever and wherever she liked.

Let not the reader think, however, that ours was a life of unrelieved bitterness. For my severities were all based on love. My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learned, and identify her life and thought with mine. Kasturbai was illiterate. I was very anxious to teach her, but the teaching had to be done against her will, and that too at night. I dared not meet her in the presence of the elders, much less talk to her. Therefore most of my efforts to instruct Kasturbai in our youth were unsuccessful. And when I awoke from the sleep of lust, I had already launched forth into public life, which did not leave me much spare time. As a result, Kasturbai can now with difficulty write simple letters.

My studies continued. I had not any high regard for my ability. I used to be astonished whenever I won prizes and scholarships. But I very jealously guarded my character. The least little blemish drew tears from my eyes. When I merited, or seemed to the teacher to merit, a rebuke, it was unbearable for me. I remember having once received corporal punishment. I did not so much mind the punishment, as the fact that it was considered my desert. I wept piteously.

I never took part in any exercise, cricket or football, before they were made compulsory. My shyness was one of the reasons for this aloofness. However, I was none the worse for abstaining from exercise. That was because I had read in books about the benefits of long walks in the open air, and having liked the advice, I had formed a habit of taking walks, which has still remained with me. These walks gave me a fairly hardy constitution.

The reason of my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire to serve as nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him.

MY SHAME

Amongst my few friends at the high school, I had two who might be called intimate. One of these friendships I regard as a tragedy in my life. A wave of 'reform' was sweeping over Rajkot at the time when I first came across this friend. He informed me that many of our teachers were secretly taking meat and wine [in a society where both were mostly taboo]. He also named many well-known people of Rajkot as belonging to the same company. There were also, I was told, some high school boys among them. I was surprised and pained. I asked my friend the reason and he explained it thus: "We are a weak people because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us, because they are meat-eaters. You know how hardy I am, and how great a runner too. It is because I am a meat-eater. Our teachers and other distinguished people who eat meat are no fools. They know its virtues. You should do likewise."

My elder brother had already fallen. He therefore supported my friend's argument. I certainly looked feeble-bodied by the side of my brother and this friend. They were both

hardier, physically stronger, and more daring. I was dazzled by this friend's exploits. This was followed by a strong desire to be like him.

Moreover, I was a coward. I used to be haunted by the fear of thieves, ghosts, and serpents. I did not dare to stir out of doors at night. Darkness was a terror to me. It was almost impossible for me to sleep in the dark, as I would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from another and serpents from a third. How could I disclose my fears to my wife, no child, but already at the threshold of youth? I knew that she had more courage than I, and I felt ashamed of myself. She knew no fear of serpents and ghosts. She could go out anywhere in the dark. My friend knew these weaknesses of mine. He would tell me that he could hold in his hand live serpents, could defy thieves and did not believe in ghosts. And all this was, of course, the result of eating meat. All this had its due effect on me. It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome.

A day was thereupon fixed for beginning the experiment. It had to be conducted in secret. My parents were staunch Vaishnavas. They would regularly visit the *haveli* [temple]. Jainism was strong in Gujarat, and its influence was felt everywhere and on all occasions. These were the traditions in which I was born and bred. And I was extremely devoted to my parents. I knew that the moment they came to know of my having eaten meat, they would be shocked to death. But my mind was bent on the 'reform'. I wished to be strong and daring and wanted my countrymen also to be such, so that we might defeat the English and make India free. The frenzy of the 'reform' blinded me.

So the day came. We went in search of a lonely spot by the river, and there I saw, for the first time in my life – meat. The goat's meat was as tough as leather. I simply could not

eat it. I was sick and had to leave off eating. I had a very bad night afterwards. A horrible nightmare haunted me. Every time I dropped off to sleep it would seem as though a live goat were bleating inside me, and I would jump up full of remorse. But then I would remind myself that meat-eating was a duty.

My friend was not a man to give in easily. He now began to cook various delicacies with meat. And for dining, no longer was the secluded spot on the river chosen, but a State house, with its dining hall, and tables and chairs, about which my friend had made arrangements in collusion with the chief cook there.

This bait had its effect. I forswore my compassion for the goats, and became a relisher of meat-dishes. This went on for about a year. But not more than half a dozen meat-feasts were enjoyed in all. I had no money to pay for this 'reform'. My friend had therefore always to find the wherewithal.

Whenever I had occasion to indulge in these surreptitious feasts, dinner at home was out of the question. My mother would naturally want to know the reason why I did not wish to eat. I would say to her, "I have no appetite today; there is something wrong with my digestion." It was not without compunction that I devised these pretexts. I knew I was lying, and lying to my mother. This knowledge was gnawing at my heart.

Therefore I said to myself: "Though it is essential to eat meat, yet deceiving and lying to one's father and mother is worse than not eating meat. In their lifetime, therefore, meat-eating must be out of the question. When they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will eat meat openly; but until that moment arrives I will abstain from it." This decision I communicated to my friend, and I have never since gone back to meat.

I abjured meat out of my desire not to lie to my parents, but I did not abjure the company of my friend. The same company would have led me into faithlessness to my wife. But I was saved by the skin of my teeth. My friend once took me to a brothel. He sent me in with the necessary instructions. It

was all pre-arranged. The bill had already been paid. I went into the jaws of sin. I was almost struck blind and dumb in this den of vice. I sat near the woman on her bed, but I was tongue-tied. She naturally lost patience with me, and showed me the door, with abuses and insults. I then felt as though my manhood had been injured, and wished to sink into the ground for shame. But I have ever since given thanks to God for having saved me. I can recall four more similar incidents in my life, and in most of them my good fortune, rather than any effort on my part, saved me.

One of the reasons of my differences with my wife was undoubtedly the company of this friend. I was both a devoted and a jealous husband, and this friend fanned the flame of my suspicions about my wife. And I never have forgiven myself the violence of which I have been guilty in often having pained my wife by acting on his information. Perhaps only a Hindu wife would tolerate these hardships, and that is why I have regarded woman as an incarnation of tolerance. A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father's roof, and a friend may put an end to the friendship. The wife, if she suspects her husband, will keep quiet; but if the husband suspects her, she is ruined. Where is she to go? And I can never forgive myself for having driven my wife to that desperation. Whenever I think of those dark days of doubts and suspicions, I am filled with loathing of my folly and my lustful cruelty.

When I was fifteen I stole a bit of gold out of my meat-eating brother's armlet. This brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. He had on his arm an armlet of solid gold. It was not difficult to clip a bit out of it.

Well, it was done, and the debt cleared. But this became more than I could bear. I made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. No. I do not recall his ever having

beaten any of us. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him.

I decided at last to write out the confession, to submit it to my father, and ask his forgiveness. I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence. I also pledged myself never to steal in future. I was trembling as I handed the confession to my father.

He read it through and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. I also cried. I could see my father's agony. It is still so vivid in my mind. Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away.

This sort of sublime forgiveness was not natural to my father. I had thought that he would be angry, say hard things, and strike his forehead. But he was so wonderfully peaceful, and I believe this was due to my clean confession. I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure.

The time of which I am now speaking is my sixteenth year. My father was bedridden, suffering from a fistula. My mother, an old servant of the house, and I were his principal attendants. I had the duties of a nurse, which mainly consisted in dressing the wound and giving my father his medicine. Every night I massaged his legs and retired only when he asked me to do so or after he had fallen asleep. I loved to do this service. I do not remember ever having neglected it. All the time at my disposal, after the performance of the daily duties, was divided between school and attending on my father.

This was also the time when my wife was expecting a baby. Every night whilst my hands were busy massaging my father's legs, my mind was hovering about the bedroom. I was always glad to be relieved from my duty, and went straight to the bedroom after doing obeisance to my father.

At the same time, my father was getting worse every day. He despaired of living any longer. The dreadful night came. It was 10-30 or 11 p.m. I was giving the massage. My uncle offered to relieve me. I was glad and went straight to the bedroom. My wife, poor thing, was fast asleep. But how could she sleep when I was there? I woke her up. In five or six minutes, however, the servant knocked at the door. I started with alarm. "Get up," he said, "Father is very ill." I knew of course that he was very ill, and so I guessed what "very ill" meant at that moment. I sprang out of bed. "What is the matter? Do tell me!" "Father is no more." So all was over! I had but to wring my hands. I felt deeply ashamed and miserable. I ran to my father's room. I saw that if animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments. I should have been massaging him, and he would have died in my arms.

It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget. I have always thought that, although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds and I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust. It took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it.

GLIMPSES OF RELIGION

Being born in the Vaishnava faith, I had often to go to the *haveli*. But it never appealed to me. I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumors of immorality being practiced there, and lost all interest in it. Hence I could gain nothing from the *haveli*. But what I failed to get there I obtained from my nurse, an old servant of the family, whose affection for me I still recall. I have said before that there was in me a fear of

ghosts and spirits. Rambha, for that was her name, suggested, as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of *Rama-nama* [the name of god Rama]. I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating *Rama-nama* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman that today *Rama-nama* is an infallible remedy for me.

What, however, left a deep impression on me was the reading of the *Ramayana* before my father. During his illness every evening he used to listen to the *Ramayana*. The reader was a great devotee of Rama, Ladha Maharaj. He had a melodious voice. He would sing the *dohas* (couplets), and explain them, losing himself in the discourse and carrying his listeners along with him. I quite remember being enraptured by his reading. That laid the foundation of my deep devotion to the *Ramayana*. Today I regard the *Ramayana* of Tulasidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature.

It is my perpetual regret that I was not fortunate enough to hear more good books of this kind read during that period. However, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father and mother would visit the *haveli* as also Shiva's and Rama's temples, and would take us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father. They would have talks with my father on subjects religious and mundane. He had, besides, Musalman and Parsi friends who would talk to him about their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect. Being his nurse, I often had a chance to be present at these talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me toleration for all faiths.

But one thing took deep root in me: the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever-widening. A Gujarati didactic stanza likewise gripped

my mind and heart. Its precept – return good for evil – became my guiding principle. It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiments in it. Here are those wonderful lines:

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;
Every little service tenfold they reward.
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.

TO ENGLAND

I passed the matriculation examination in 1887. My elders wanted me to pursue my studies at college. There was a college in Bhavnagar and I decided to go there and join the Samaldas College. I went, but found myself entirely at sea. Everything was difficult. I could not follow, let alone take interest in, the professors' lectures. It was no fault of theirs. The professors in that college were regarded as first-rate. But I was so raw. At the end of the first term, I returned home.

We had in Mavji Dave a shrewd and learned friend and adviser of the family. He happened to visit us during my vacation. In conversation with my mother and elder brother, he inquired about my studies. Learning that I was at Samaldas College, he said: "The times are changed. And none of you can expect to succeed to your father's *gadi* [post] without having had a proper education. Now this boy will take four or five years to get his B.A. degree, which will at best qualify him for a sixty rupees' post. I would far rather that you sent him

to England. In three years' time he will return. I would strongly advise you to send Mohandas to England this very year.

Joshiji – that is how we used to call old Mavji Dave – turned to me with complete assurance, and asked: "Would you not rather go to England than study here?" Nothing could have been more welcome to me. So I jumped at the proposal.

Joshiji said: "Now I must leave. Pray ponder over what I have said. When I come here next I shall expect to hear of preparations for England." Joshiji went away, and I began building castles in the air.

My mother was sorely perplexed. She did not like the idea of parting with me. My elder brother was greatly exercised in his mind. How was he to find the wherewithal to send me? I suggested the disposal of my wife's ornaments, which could fetch about two or three thousand rupees.

My mother, however, was still unwilling. She had begun making minute inquiries. Someone had told her that young men got lost in England. Someone else had said that they took to meat, and yet another that they could not live there without liquor. "How about all this?" she asked me. I said: "Will you not trust me?"

"I can trust you," she said. "But I am dazed and know not what to do. I will ask Becharji Swami."

Becharji Swami too was a family adviser like Joshiji. He came to my help, and said: "I shall get the boy solemnly to take the three vows, and then he can be allowed to go." He administered the oath and I vowed not to touch wine, woman and meat. This done, my mother gave her permission. With the blessing of my elders, I started for Bombay, leaving my wife with a baby of a few months. But there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. There were difficulties to be faced in Bombay.

Meanwhile my caste-people were agitated over my going abroad. No *Modh Bania* had been to England up to now, and if I dared to do so, I ought to be brought to book! A general

meeting of the caste was called and I was summoned to appear before it. I went. How I suddenly managed to muster up courage I do not know. Nothing daunted, and without the slightest hesitation, I came before the meeting. The Sheth – the headman of the community – who had been on very good terms with my father, thus accosted me:

"In the opinion of the caste, your proposal to go to England is not proper. Our religion forbids voyages abroad. We have also heard that it is not possible to live there without compromising our religion. One is obliged to eat and drink with Europeans!"

To which I replied: "I do not think it is at all against our religion to go to England. I intend going there for further studies. And I have already solemnly promised to my mother to abstain from three things you fear most. I am sure the vow will keep me safe."

"But we tell you," rejoined the Sheth, "that it is not possible to keep our religion there. You know my relations with your father and you ought to listen to my advice."

"I know those relations." said I. "And you are as an elder to me. But I am helpless in this matter. I cannot alter my resolve to go to England. My father's friend and adviser, who is a learned *Brahman*, sees no objection to my going to England, and my mother and brother have also given me their permission."

"But will you disregard the orders of the caste?"

"I am really helpless. I think the caste should not interfere in the matter."

This incensed the Sheth. He swore at me. I sat unmoved. So the Sheth pronounced his order: "This boy shall be treated as an outcaste from today. Whoever helps him or goes to see him off at the dock shall be punishable with a fine of one rupee four annas." The order had no effect on me, and I took my leave of the Sheth.

As I was worrying over my predicament, I heard that a

vakil was going to England, by a boat sailing on the 4th of September [1888]. Friends agreed that I should not let go the opportunity of going in such company. A berth was reserved for me in the same cabin as that of Tryambakrai Mazmudar, the *vakil*. They also commended me to him. He was an experienced man of mature age and knew the world. I was yet a stripling of eighteen without any experience of the world.

As the days passed, I became fidgety. I was quite unaccustomed to talking [in] English. I was innocent of the use of knives and forks and had not the boldness to inquire what dishes on the menu were free of meat. I therefore never took meals at the table but always had them in my cabin, and they consisted principally of sweets and fruits which I had brought with me.

IN LONDON

Someone on board had advised us to put up at the Victoria Hotel in London. Mazmudar and I accordingly went there.

I was very uneasy. I would continually think of my home and country. My mother's love always haunted me. At night tears would stream down my cheeks, and home-memories of all sorts made sleep out of the question. It was impossible to share my misery with anyone. Everything was strange – the people, their ways, and even their dwellings. I was a complete novice in the matter of English etiquette and continually had to be on my guard. England I could not bear, but to return to India was not to be thought of. Now that I had come, I must finish the three years.

I had not yet started upon my regular studies. I had just begun reading newspapers. In India I had never read a newspaper. But here I succeeded in cultivating a liking for them by regular reading. I always glanced over *The Daily News*,

The Daily Telegraph, and *The Pall Mall Gazette*. This took me hardly an hour. I therefore began to wander about. I launched out in search of a vegetarian restaurant. I would trot ten or twelve miles each day, go into a cheap restaurant and eat my fill of bread, but would never be satisfied. During these wanderings I once hit on a vegetarian restaurant. The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart. Before I entered I noticed books for sale exhibited under a glass window near the door. I saw among them Salt's *[A] Plea for Vegetarianism*. This I purchased for a shilling and went straight to the dining room. This was my first hearty meal since my arrival in England.

I read Salt's book from cover to cover and was very much impressed by it. From the date of reading this book, I may claim to have become a vegetarian by choice. I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now made in favor of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforward became my mission.

Salt's book whetted my appetite for dietetic studies. I went in for all books available on vegetarianism and read them. The result of reading all this literature was that dietetic experiments came to take an important place in my life. Health was the principal consideration of these experiments to begin with. But later on religion became the supreme motive.

I kept account of every farthing I spent, and my expenses were carefully calculated. Every little item such as bus fares or postage or a couple of coppers spent on newspapers, would be entered, and the balance struck every evening before going to bed. That habit has stayed with me ever since; and I know that as a result, though I have had to handle public funds amounting to *lakhs*, I have succeeded in exercising strict economy in their disbursement, and instead of outstanding

debts have had invariably a surplus balance in respect of all the movements I have led. Let every youth take a leaf out of my book and make it a point to account for everything that comes into and goes out of his pocket, and like me he is sure to be a gainer in the end.

As I kept strict watch over my way of living, I could see that it was necessary to economize. So I decided to take rooms on my own account, instead of living any longer in a family. The rooms were so selected as to enable me to reach the place of business on foot in half an hour, and so save fares. Before this I had always taken some kind of conveyance whenever I went anywhere, and had to find extra time for walks. The new arrangement combined walks and economy, as it meant a saving of fares and gave me walks of eight or ten miles a day. It was mainly this habit of long walks that kept me practically free from illness throughout my stay in England and gave me a fairly strong body.

These changes saved me half the expense. I made an effort to simplify my life still further. I felt that my way of living did not yet befit the modest means of my family. The thought of my struggling brother, who nobly responded to my regular calls for monetary help, deeply pained me. I also came across books on simple living. I gave up the suite of rooms and rented one instead, invested in a stove, and began cooking my breakfast at home. The process scarcely took me more than twenty minutes, for there was only oatmeal porridge to cook and water to boil for cocoa. I had lunch out and for dinner bread and cocoa at home. This was also a period of intensive study. Plain living saved me plenty of time and I passed my examination.

Vegetarianism was then a new cult in England, and likewise for me, because I had gone there a convinced meat-eater, and was intellectually converted to vegetarianism later. Full of the neophyte's zeal, I decided to start a vegetarian club in my locality. I invited Sir Edwin Arnold, who lived there, to be Vice-President. Dr. Oldfield who was Editor of *The Vegetarian* became President. I myself became the Secretary. The club went well for a while, but came to an end in the course of a few months for I left the locality, according to my custom of moving from place to place periodically. But this brief and modest experience gave me some little training in organizing and conducting institutions.

I was elected to the Executive Committee of the Vegetarian Society, and made it a point to attend every one of its meetings, but I always felt tongue-tied. I was at a loss to know how to express myself. This shyness I retained throughout my stay in England. Even when I paid a social call, the presence of half a dozen or more people would strike me dumb. It was only in South Africa that I got over this shyness, though I never completely overcame it. I hesitated whenever I had to face strange audiences and avoided making a speech whenever I could.

I must say that, beyond occasionally exposing me to laughter, my constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever. In fact I can see that, on the contrary, it has been all to my advantage. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words. I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And I can now give myself the certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen. I do not recollect ever having had to regret anything in my speech or writing. I have thus been spared many a mishap and waste of time. Experience has taught me

that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth. Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man and silence is necessary in order to surmount it. A man of few words will rarely be thoughtless in his speech; he will measure every word. My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth.

There were comparatively few Indian students in England. It was a practice with them to affect the bachelor even though they might be married. Indian youths in England felt ashamed to confess that they were married. There was also another reason for dissembling, namely that in the event of the fact being known it would be impossible for the young men to go about or flirt with the young girls of the family in which they lived. I too caught the contagion. I did not hesitate to pass myself off as a bachelor though I was married and the father of a son. Only my reserve and my reticence saved me from going into deeper waters.

But I could not escape scatheless everywhere. I once went to Brighton. I met there at a hotel an old widow of moderate means. This was my first year in England. The courses on the menu were all described in French, which I did not understand. I sat at the same table as the old lady. She saw that I was a stranger and puzzled, and immediately came to my aid. "You seem to be a stranger," she said, "and look perplexed. Why have you not ordered anything?" I thanked her, and explaining my difficulty told her that I was at a loss to know which of the courses were vegetarian as I did not understand French.

"Let me help you," she said. "I shall explain the card to you and show you what you may eat." I gratefully availed myself of her help. This was the beginning of an acquaintance that ripened into friendship and was kept up all through my stay in England and long after. She gave me her London address and invited me to dine at her house every Sunday. On special

occasions also she would invite me, help me to conquer my bashfulness and introduce me to young ladies and draw me into conversation with them. Particularly marked out for these conversations was a young lady who stayed with her, and often we would be left entirely alone together.

I found all this very trying at first. I could not start a conversation nor could I indulge in any jokes. But she put me in the way. I began to learn; and in course of time looked forward to every Sunday and came to like the conversations with the young friend. The old lady felt interested in our meetings. Possibly she had her own plans about us.

I was in a quandary. "How I wished I had told the good lady that I was married!" I said to myself. "She would then have not thought of an engagement between us. It is, however, never too late to mend. If I declare the truth, I might yet be saved more misery." With these thoughts in my mind, I wrote a letter to her somewhat to this effect:

"Ever since we met at Brighton you have been kind to me. You have taken care of me even as a mother of her son. You also think that I should get married and with that view you have been introducing me to young ladies. Rather than allow matters to go further, I must confess to you that I have been unworthy of your affection. I should have told you when I began my visits to you that I was married. I knew that Indian students in England dissembled the fact of their marriage and I followed suit. I now see that I should not have done so. I must also add that I am the father of a son. I am pained that I should have kept this knowledge from you so long. Will you forgive me? I assure you I have taken no improper liberties with the young lady you were good enough to introduce to me. You, not knowing that I was married, naturally desired that we should be engaged. In order that things should not go beyond the present stage, I must tell you the truth.

"If you feel that I have been unworthy of your hospitality, I assure you I shall not take it amiss. You have laid me under

an everlasting debt of gratitude by your kindness and solicitude. If, after this, you do not reject me but continue to regard me as worthy of your hospitality, which I will spare no pains to deserve, I shall naturally be happy and count it a further token of your kindness."

Almost by return post came her reply, somewhat as follows:

"I have your frank letter. We were both very glad and had a hearty laugh over it. The untruth you say you have been guilty of is pardonable. But it is well that you have acquainted us with the real state of things. My invitation still stands and we shall certainly expect you next Sunday and look forward to hearing all about your child-marriage and to the pleasure of laughing at your expense. Need I assure you that our friendship is not in the least affected by this incident?"

I thus purged myself of the canker of untruth, and I never thenceforward hesitated to talk of my married state wherever necessary.

During the last year of my stay in England there was a Vegetarian Conference at Portsmouth to which an Indian friend and I were invited. Portsmouth is a sea-port with a large naval population. It has many houses with women of ill fame, women not actually prostitutes, but at the same time, not very scrupulous about their morals. We were put up in one of these houses. Needles to say, the Reception Committee did not know anything about it. It would have been difficult in a town like Portsmouth to find out which were good lodgings and which were bad for occasional travelers like us.

We returned from the Conference in the evening. After dinner we sat down to play bridge, in which our landlady joined, as is customary in England even in respectable households. Every player indulges in innocent jokes as a matter of course, but here my companion and our hostess began to make indecent ones as well. I did not know that my friend was an adept in the art. It captured me and I also joined in. Just when

I was about to go beyond the limit, leaving the cards and the game to themselves, the good companion uttered the blessed warning: "Whence this devil in you, my boy? Be off, quick!"

I was ashamed. I took the warning and expressed within myself gratefulness to my friend. Remembering the vow I had taken before my mother, I fled from the scene. To my room I went quaking, trembling, and with beating heart, like a quarry escaped from its pursuer.

I recall this as the first occasion on which a woman, other than my wife, moved me to lust. I passed that night sleeplessly, all kinds of thoughts assailing me. Where was I? What would happen to me if I had not my wits about me? I left Portsmouth the next evening.

I did not then know the essence of religion or of God, and how He works in us. Only vaguely I understood that God had saved me on that occasion.

MY HELPLESSNESS

But notwithstanding my study, there was no end to my helplessness and fear. I did not feel myself qualified to practice law. It was easy to be called, but it was difficult to practice at the bar. I had read the laws, but not learned how to practice law. Besides, I had learned nothing at all of Indian law. I had not the slightest idea of Hindu and Mahomedan Law. I had not even learned how to draft a plaint, and felt completely at sea. I had serious misgivings as to whether I should be able even to earn a living by the profession.

I was torn with these doubts and anxieties. I confided my difficulties to some of my friends. One of them suggested that I should seek Dadabhai Naoroji's advice. When I went to England, I possessed a note of introduction to Dadabhai. I availed myself of it very late. I thought I had no right to trouble

such a great man for an interview. Whenever an address by him was announced, I would attend it, listen to him from a corner of the hall, and go away after having feasted my eyes and ears. In course of time I mustered up courage to present to him the note of introduction. He said: "You can come and have my advice whenever you like." But I never availed myself of his offer. I thought it wrong to trouble him without the most pressing necessity.

The same friend or someone else recommended me to meet Mr. Frederick Pincutt. He was a Conservative, but his affection for Indian students was pure and unselfish. Many students sought his advice and I also applied to him for an appointment, which he granted. I can never forget that interview. He greeted me as a friend. He laughed away my pessimism. "Do you think," he said, "that everyone must be a Pherozeshah Mehta? Pherozeshahs are rare. It takes no unusual skill to be an ordinary lawyer. Common honesty and industry are enough to enable him to make a living. All cases are not complicated. Well, let me know the extent of your general reading."

When I acquainted him with my little stock of reading, he was, as I could see, rather disappointed. But it was only for a moment. Soon his face beamed with a pleasing smile and he said, "I understand your trouble. Your general reading is meager. You have no knowledge of the world, a *sine qua non* for a *vakil*. You have not even read the history of India. A *vakil* should know human nature. He should be able to read a man's character from his face."

I was extremely grateful to this venerable friend. Mr. Pincutt's kindliness stood me in good stead. I trusted his advice that Pherozeshah Mehta's acumen, memory and ability were not essential to the making of a successful lawyer; honesty and industry were enough. And as I had a fair share of these last I felt somewhat reassured.

I passed my examinations, was called to the bar on the

10th of June, 1891, and enrolled in the High Court on the 11th. On the 12th I sailed for home. Thus with just a little leaven of hope mixed with my despair, I landed at Bombay from SS *Assam*.

RAYCHANDBHAI, MY REFUGE

As Dr. Mehta insisted on putting me up at his house, we went there. I was pining to see my mother. I did not know that she was no more in the flesh to receive me back into her bosom. The sad news was now given me. My brother had kept me ignorant of her death, which took place whilst I was still in England. He wanted to spare me the blow in a foreign land. The news, however, was none the less a severe shock to me. But, I did not give myself up to any wild expression of grief and took to life just as though nothing had happened.

Dr. Mehta introduced me to several friends. But the introduction that I need particularly take note of was the one to the poet Raychand or Rajchandra. He was not above twenty-five then, but my first meeting with him convinced me that he was a man of great character and learning. He was also known as a *Shatavadhani* (one having the faculty of remembering or attending to a hundred things simultaneously). I envied his gift without, however, coming under its spell. The thing that did cast its spell over me I came to know afterwards. This was his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character, and his burning passion for self-realization. I saw later that this last was the only thing for which he lived.

He was a connoisseur of pearls and diamonds. But all these things were not the center round which his life revolved. That center was the passion to see God face to face. Amongst the things on his business table there were invariably to be found some religious book and his diary. The moment he

finished his business he opened the religious book or the diary. Much of his published writings is a reproduction from this diary. The man who, immediately on finishing his talk about weighty business transactions, began to write about the hidden things of the spirit could evidently not be a businessman at all, but a real seeker after Truth. I have since met many a religious leader or teacher. I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge.

And yet in spite of this regard for him I could not enthrone him in my heart as my *guru*. The throne has remained vacant and my search still continues.

Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life, and captivated me: Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*.

HOW I BEGAN LIFE

The storm in my caste over my foreign voyage was still brewing. It had divided the caste into two camps, one of which immediately readmitted me, while the other was bent on keeping me out. To please the former my brother took me to Nasik, gave me a bath in the sacred river and, on reaching Rajkot, gave a caste dinner. I did not like all this. But my brother's love for me was boundless, so I mechanically acted as he wished.

I never tried to seek admission to the section that had refused it. Nor did I feel even mental resentment against any of the headmen of that section. I fully respected the caste regulations about excommunication. According to these, none

of my relations, including my father-in-law and mother-in-law, and even my sister and brother-in-law, could entertain me; and I would not so much as drink water at their houses. They were prepared secretly to evade the prohibition, but it went against the grain with me to do a thing in secret that I would not do in public.

The result of my scrupulous conduct was that I never had occasion to be troubled by the caste; nay, I have experienced nothing but affection and generosity from the general body of the section that still regards me as excommunicated. It is my conviction that all these good things are due to my non-resistance. Had I agitated for being admitted to the caste, had I provoked the caste-men, they would surely have retaliated.

My elder brother had built high hopes on me. He had assumed that I should have a swinging practice and had, in that expectation, allowed the household expenses to become top-heavy. My brother had children, and my own child which I had left at home when I went to England was now a boy of nearly four. It was my desire to teach these little ones physical exercise and make them hardy. I very much liked the company of children, and the habit of playing and joking with them has stayed with me till today. I have ever since thought that I should make a good teacher of children.

My brother had thought it fit to keep some sort of English atmosphere ready for me on my return. I completed the Europeanization by adding the European dress. Expenses thus went up. New things were added every day. We had succeeded in tying a white elephant at our door. But how was the wherewithal to be found? To start practice in Rajkot would have meant sure ridicule. I had hardly the knowledge of a qualified *vakil* [lawyer] and yet I expected to be paid ten times his fee! Friends advised me to go to Bombay for some time in order to gain experience of the High Court, to study Indian law and to try to get what briefs I could. I took up the

suggestion and went. But it was impossible for me to get along in Bombay for more than four or five months, there being no income to square with the ever-increasing expenditure.

Whilst in Bombay, I began my study of Indian law. About this time, I took up the case of one Mamibai. "You will have to pay some commission to the tout," I was told. I emphatically declined.

"But even that great criminal lawyer Mr. So-and-So, who makes three to four thousand a month, pays commission!"

"I do not need to emulate him," I rejoined. "I should be content with Rs. 300 a month.

I gave no commission, but got Mamibai's case all the same. It was an easy case. I charged Rs. 30 for my fees. The case was not likely to last longer than a day. This was my debut in the Small Causes Court. I appeared for the defendant and had thus to cross-examine the plaintiff's witnesses. I stood up, but my heart sank into my boots. My head was reeling and I felt as though the whole court was doing likewise. I could think of no question to ask. The judge must have laughed, and the *vakils* no doubt enjoyed the spectacle. But I was past seeing anything. I sat down and told the agent that I could not conduct the case, that he had better engage Patel and have the fee back from me. Mr. Patel was duly engaged for Rs. 51. To him, of course, the case was child's play. I hastened from the Court, but I was ashamed of myself, and decided not to take up any more cases until I had courage enough to conduct them. Indeed I did not go to Court again until I went to South Africa.

If the present generation has also its briefless barristers like me in Bombay, I would commend them a little practical precept about living. I hardly ever took a carriage or a tramcar. I had made it a rule to walk to the High Court. It took me quite forty-five minutes, and of course I invariably returned home on foot. This walk to and from the Court saved a fair amount of money, and when many of my friends in Bombay

used to fall ill, I do not remember having once had an illness. Even when I began to earn money, I kept up the practice of walking to and from the office, and I am still reaping the benefits of that practice.

Disappointed, I left Bombay and went to Rajkot. Here I got along moderately well. Drafting applications and memorials brought me in, on an average, Rs. 300 a month.

TO SOUTH AFRICA

Meanwhile I began to learn something of the petty politics of the country. Petty intrigues between states, and intrigues of officers for power were the order of the day. Even the *sahib's* peon had to be cajoled, and the *sahib's shirastedar* was more than his master, as he was his eyes, his ears and his interpreter. The *shirastedar's* will was law, and his income was reputed to be more than the *sahib's*. This atmosphere appeared to me to be poisonous, and how to remain unscathed was a perpetual problem for me. I was exasperated.

In the meantime a firm from Porbandar wrote to my brother making the following offer: "We have business in South Africa. We have a big case there in the Court, our claim being £40,000. It has been going on for a long time. We have engaged the services of the best barristers. If you sent your brother there, he would be useful to us and also to himself. He would be able to instruct our counsel better than ourselves. And he would have the advantage of seeing a new part of the world, and of making new acquaintances."

My brother introduced me to Abdul Karim Jhaveri – a partner of Dada Abdulla & Co., the firm in question. "It won't be a difficult job," the Sheth assured me. "You will, of course, be our guest and hence will have no expense whatever."

"How long do you require my services?" I asked. "And what will be the payment?"

"Not more than a year. We will pay you a first class return fare and a sum of £105, all found."

I wanted somehow to leave India. There was also the tempting opportunity of seeing a new country, and of having new experience. Also, I could send £105 to my brother and help in the expenses of the household. I closed with the offer without any higgling.

In April 1893 I set forth full of zest to try my luck in South Africa. We reached Natal towards the close of May. The port of Natal is Durban. Abdulla Sheth was there to receive me. As the ship arrived at the quay and I watched the people coming on board to meet their friends, I observed that the Indians were not held in much respect. I could not fail to notice a sort of snobbishness about the manner in which those who knew Abdulla Sheth behaved towards him, and it stung me. Abdulla Sheth had got used to it.

Abdulla Sheth was practically unlettered, but he had a rich fund of experience. He had an acute intellect and was conscious of it. By practice he had picked up just sufficient English for conversational purposes, but that served him for carrying on all his business. The Indians held him in very high esteem. His firm was then one of the biggest of the Indian firms.

In the course of two or three days, I could see that the Indians were divided into different groups. One was that of Musalman merchants, who would call themselves Arabs. Another was that of Hindu, and yet another of Parsi, clerks. But by far the largest class was that composed of Tamil, Telugu and North Indian indentured and freed laborers. The indentured laborers were those who went to Natal on an agreement to serve for five years, and came to be known there as *girmitiyas* from *girmit*, which was the corrupt form of the English word 'agreement'. Englishmen called them coolies and as the

majority of Indians belonged to the laboring class, all Indians were called coolies. I was hence known as a coolie barrister. The merchants were known as coolie merchants. The word coolie thus became a common appellation for all Indians.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Africa is one of the biggest continents in the world. Considering area alone, four or five Indias could be carved out of Africa. South Africa is mainly surrounded by the sea. The climate of many parts is so healthy and temperate that Europeans can settle there in comfort.

Delagoa Bay is the first South African port for steamers from India. As we proceed further south, we come to Natal. Durban is the largest city in Natal. The capital is Pietermaritzburg, situated inland at a height of about two thousand feet. If we proceed further inland beyond Natal we reach the Transvaal, whose mines supply the world with the largest amount of gold. The capital of the Transvaal is Pretoria. If we travel further inland towards the West, we come to Orange Free State or Orangia. A few hours' railway journey from here takes us to the boundary of the Cape Colony, the biggest of all the South African colonies. Its capital is known as Cape Town and is situated on the Cape of Good Hope, so called by King John of Portugal as after its discovery he hoped his people would be able to find a new and easier way of reaching India, the supreme object of the maritime expeditions of that age. The combined area of these four colonies is 473,000 square miles.

The chief industry of South Africa is agriculture and for this it is pre-eminently fitted. Some parts of it are delightful and fertile. The principal grain is maize, which is grown without much labor and forms the staple food of the Negro inhabitants.

South Africa is famous for its fruits. Oranges, peaches and apricots grow in such plenty that thousands get them in the country for the labor of gathering them. Vegetables also are extensively grown in that fertile country. Not only has Nature showered her other gifts upon this country, but she has not been stingy in beautifying it with a fine landscape. South Africa cannot boast of such mighty rivers as the Ganges or the Indus. The few that are there are comparatively small. Rainfall is uncertain and capricious. It may occur any time. The average annual rainfall rarely exceeds twenty inches.

When the Europeans settled in South Africa, they found the Negroes there. They are divided into various tribes such as the Zulus, the Swazis, the Basutos, the Bechuanas, etc. They have a number of different languages. In 1914 the Negro population in this vast region was about five millions, while the Europeans numbered about a million and a quarter.

About four hundred years ago the Dutch founded a settlement in this great country, then inhabited by such a simple and unsophisticated race. The Dutch have been as skillful cultivators as they have been brave soldiers. They saw that the country around them was highly suited for agriculture. They also saw that the natives easily maintained themselves by working for only a short time during the year. Why should they not force these people to labor for them? The Dutch had guns. They knew how to tame human beings like other animals. In this way they commenced agriculture with the labor of the natives. As the Dutch were in search of good lands for their own expansion, so were the English who also gradually arrived on the scene. The English and the Dutch were, of course, cousins. Their characters and ambitions were similar. So these two nations, while gradually advancing their respective interests and subduing the Negroes, came into collision. There were disputes between them which assumed a serious form and came to a head in the Boer War which lasted from 1899 to 1902.

Many of the Dutch trekked into the unknown interior of

South Africa. This was the genesis of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. These Dutch came to be known in South Africa as Boers. They have preserved their language by clinging to it as a child clings to its mother. The language assumed a new form suited to their genius. It is called Taal. Their books are written in Taal, their children are educated through it. The Boers are simple, frank and religious. Every Boer is a good fighter. Their liberty is so dear to them that when it is in danger, all get ready and fight as one man. They do not need elaborate drilling, for fighting is a characteristic of the whole nation. General Smuts, General De Wet, and General Hertzog are all of them great lawyers, great farmers and equally great soldiers.

Boer women are as brave and simple as the men. If the Boers shed their blood in the Boer war, they were able to offer this sacrifice owing to the courage of their women folk and the inspiration they received from them. The women were not afraid of widowhood and refused to waste a thought upon the future. Boer women understood that their religion required them to suffer in order to preserve their independence, and therefore patiently and cheerfully endured all hardships. Lord Kitchener [on the British side] left no stone unturned in order to break their spirit. He confined them in separate concentration camps, where they underwent indescribable sufferings. They starved, they suffered biting cold and scorching heat. Still the brave Boer women did not flinch.

When this cry of anguish reached England, the English people were deeply pained. They were full of admiration for the bravery of the Boers. When the cry of agony raised by the women in the concentration camps reached England not through themselves, but through a few high-souled Englishmen and women who were then in South Africa, the English people began to relent. Mr. [William Thomas] Stead publicly prayed and invited others to pray, that God might decree the English a defeat in the war. This was a wonderful sight. Real suffering

bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering. And there lies the key to *satyagraha*. And at last King Edward VII wrote to Lord Kitchener, saying that he could not tolerate it, and that if it was the only means of reducing the Boers to submission, he would prefer any sort of peace to continuing the war in that fashion, and asking the General to bring the war to a speedy end.

The result was that the peace of Vereeniging was concluded, and eventually all the four Colonies of South Africa were united under one Government. The Transvaal and the Free State were governed on Crown Colony lines. Generals Botha and Smuts were not the men to be satisfied with such restricted freedom. They kept aloof from the Legislative Council. They non-cooperated. They flatly refused to have anything to do with the Government. General Botha distinctly stated that by the treaty of Vereeniging, as he understood it, the Boers were immediately entitled to complete internal autonomy. Lord Kitchener declared in reply that he had given no such pledge to General Botha. The Boers, he said, would be gradually granted full self-government as they proved their loyalty! Now who was to judge between these two? The decision arrived at in the matter by the Imperial Government of the time was very creditable to them. They conceded that the stronger party should accept the interpretation of the agreement by the weaker party. According to the principles of justice and truth, that is the correct canon of interpretation. I may have meant to say anything, but I must concede that my speech or writing was intended to convey the meaning ascribed to it by my hearer or reader in so far as he is concerned. We often break this golden rule in our lives. Hence arise many of our disputes; and half-truth, which is worse than untruth, is made to do duty for truth. Eventually South Africa obtained full self-government.

I have endeavored to sketch very briefly the history of South Africa, as without it, it appeared to me difficult to

explain the inner meaning of the great *satyagraha* struggle. It now remains to be seen how the Indians came to this country and struggled against their adversities before the inauguration of *satyagraha.*

INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The English settled in Natal. They observed that excellent sugar cane, tea and coffee could be grown in Natal. Thousands of laborers would be needed in order to grow such crops on a large scale, which was clearly beyond the capacity of a handful of colonists. They offered inducements and then threats to the Negroes in order to make them work but in vain, as slavery had been then abolished. The Negro can easily maintain himself by working for six months in the year. Why then should he bind himself to an employer for a long term? The English settlers could make no progress at all with their plantations in the absence of a stable labor force. They, therefore, opened negotiations with the [British] Government of India and requested their help for the supply of labor. That Government complied with their request, and the first batch of indentured laborers from India reached Natal on November 16, 1860. The steamer which carried those laborers to Natal carried with them the seed of the great *satyagraha* movement.

I have not the space here to narrate how the laborers were deluded by Indian recruiting agents connected with Natal; how under the influence of such delusion they left the mother country; how their eyes were opened on reaching Natal; how still they continued to stay there; how others followed them; how all the restraints which religion or morality imposes gave way; and how the very distinction between a married woman and a concubine ceased to exist among these unfortunate people.

When the news that indentured laborers had gone to Natal reached Mauritius, Indian traders were induced to follow them there. Thousands of Indians, laborers as well as traders, have settled in Mauritius which is on the way to Natal from India. An Indian trader in Mauritius, Abubakar Amad, thought of opening a shop in Natal. Abubakar Sheth carried on trade and purchased land, and the story of his prosperity reached Porbandar, his native place, and the country around. Other Memans [Muslims] consequently reached Natal. These traders needed accountants, and Hindu accountants accompanied them.

Two classes of Indians thus settled in Natal: first free traders and their free servants, and secondly indentured laborers. The laborers went to Natal under indenture for a period of five years. They were under no obligation to labor after the expiry of that period, and were entitled to work as free laborers or trade in Natal, and settle there if they wished. Some elected to do so while others returned home.

The Indian traders saw that they could trade not only with Indians, but with the Negroes as well. Trade with Negroes proved very profitable to Indian traders. Several Indian traders proceeded to the Transvaal and the Free State and opened shops there.

The European planters of Natal wanted only slaves. They could not afford to have laborers who, after serving their term, would be free to compete with them to however small an extent. The indentured laborers found that if they grew only vegetables in Natal, they could earn good incomes, and that their earnings would be still better if they owned a small piece of land. Many, therefore, on the termination of their indentures, began to pursue some trade or other on a small scale. But the European planters felt they now had competitors in a field in which they believed they had a monopoly. A movement was, therefore, set on foot against these poor laborers. While on the one hand the Europeans demanded more and more

laborers and easily took in as many of them as went from India, on the other hand they started an agitation to harass ex-indentured laborers in a variety of ways. This was the reward for their skill and hard toil!

Delegates from the new responsible Government of Natal came to India to confer with the Government of India. They proposed the imposition of an annual poll-tax of twenty-five pounds on every Indian who had been freed from indenture. It was evident that no Indian laborer could pay such an exorbitant tax and live in Natal as a free man. Lord Elgin, the Governor-General of India, considered that the amount was excessive, and ultimately he accepted an annual poll-tax of three pounds. This was equivalent to nearly six months' earnings on the indenture scale. The tax was levied, not only on the laborer himself, but also upon his wife, his daughters aged thirteen years, and his sons aged sixteen. There was hardly any laborer who had not a wife and a couple of children. Thus, as a general rule, every laborer was required to pay an annual tax of twelve pounds. It is impossible to describe the hardships that this tax entailed. What could the poor laborers do or understand in this matter? The agitation on their behalf was carried on by the Indian traders, actuated by motives of patriotism or of philanthropy. Up till 1893 there were hardly any free and well educated Indians in South Africa capable of espousing the Indian cause.

The European traders carried on a similar agitation against Indian traders. They became an eyesore to petty European traders. The Government of Natal decided to enact a law, disfranchising all Asiatics save those who were then rightly contained in any voters' list. Indians resisted this measure.

As in Natal, so in the other Colonies anti-Indian prejudice had more or less begun to grow except in the Cape Colony. In the Cape Colony there were no restrictions as to trade and the purchase of land for a long time. There were reasons for this state of things.

The Cape Colony was the oldest settlement and the chief center of culture in South Africa. It produced sober, gentlemanly and large-hearted Europeans. In my opinion, there is no place on earth and no race, which is not capable of producing the finest types of humanity, given suitable opportunities and education. It has been my good fortune to come across this class of people in all parts of South Africa. In the Cape Colony, however, the proportion of such persons was very much the larger. [They] had always espoused the cause of the Negroes. Whenever the rights of the Negroes were in danger, they stoutly stood up in their defense. They had kindly feelings for the Indians as well, though they made a distinction between Negroes and Indians. Their argument was that as the Negroes had been the inhabitants of South Africa long before the European settlers, the latter could not deprive them of their natural rights. But as for the Indians, it would not be unfair if laws calculated to remove the danger of their undue competition were enacted. All the same, they had a warm corner in their hearts for Indians. The newspapers in Cape Town, too, were less hostile to Indians than in other parts of South Africa. While it is true that there has always been less race hatred in the Cape Colony than in other parts, it is but natural that the anti-Indian feeling which constantly found expression in the other colonies also found its way to the Cape. There too, laws copied from Natal were passed.

SOME EXPERIENCES

Whilst I was widening the circle of my acquaintance, the firm received a letter from their lawyer saying that preparations should be made for the case, and that Abdulla Sheth should go to Pretoria himself or send a representative.

Abdulla Sheth asked me if I would go to Pretoria. I was prepared to go.

"Then I shall write to our lawyer. He will arrange for your lodgings. I shall also write to my friends there, but I would not advise you to stay with them. The other party has great influence in Pretoria. Should any one of them manage to read our private correspondence, it might do us much harm. The more you avoid familiarity with them, the better for us."

"Then I shall stay where your lawyer puts me up. Pray don't worry. Not a soul shall know anything that is confidential between us. But I do intend cultivating the acquaintance of the other party. I should like to be friends with them. I would try, if possible, to settle the case out of court. After all Tyeb Sheth is a relative of yours."

The mention of a probable settlement somewhat startled the Sheth, I could see. So he said: "Y...es, I see. There would be nothing better than a settlement out of court. But we are all relatives and know one another very well indeed. Tyeb Sheth is not a man to consent to a settlement easily. So, please think twice before you do anything."

"Don't be anxious about that," said I. "I need not talk to Tyeb Sheth, or for that matter to anyone else, about the case. I would only suggest to him to come to an understanding, and so save a lot of unnecessary litigation."

On the seventh or eighth day after my arrival, I left Durban. A first class seat was booked for me. It was usual there to pay five shillings extra, if one needed a bedding. Abdulla Sheth insisted that I should book one bedding but, with a view to saving five shillings, I declined. Abdulla Sheth warned me. "Look now," said he, "this is a different country from India. Thank God, we have enough and to spare. Please do not stint yourself in anything that you may need." I thanked him and asked him not to be anxious.

The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. Beddings used to be provided at this station. A

railway servant came and asked me if I wanted one. "No," said I, "I have one with me." He went away. But a passenger came next, and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'colored' man. This disturbed him. Out he went and came in again with one or two officials. They all kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, "Come along, you must go to the van compartment."

"But I have a first class ticket," said I.

"That doesn't matter," rejoined the other. "I tell you, you must go to the van compartment."

"I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it."

"No, you won't," said the official. "You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out."

"Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily."

The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting room, keeping my hand-bag with me, and leaving the other luggage where it was.

It was winter, and winter in the higher regions of South Africa is severely cold. Maritzburg being at a high altitude, the cold was extremely bitter. My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again, so I sat and shivered. There was no light in the room.

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial – only a symptom of the deep disease of color prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.

The following morning I sent a long telegram to the General manager of the railway and also informed Abdulla

Sheth, who immediately met the General Manager. The Manager justified the conduct of the railway authorities, but informed him that he had already instructed the Station Master to see that I reached my destination safely. Abdulla Sheth wired to the Indian merchants in Maritzburg and to friends in other places to meet me and look after me. The merchants came to see me at the station and tried to comfort me by narrating their own hardships and explaining that what had happened to me was nothing unusual. They also said that Indians traveling first or second class had to expect trouble from railway officials and white passengers. The day was thus spent in listening to these tales of woe. The evening train arrived. There was a reserved berth for me.

The train reached Charlestown in the morning. There was no railway, in those days, between Charlestown and Johannesburg, but only a stage-coach, which halted at Standerton for the night *en route*. I possessed a ticket for the coach. But as I was regarded as a 'coolie', it would be proper, thought the 'leader', as the white man in charge of the coach was called, not to seat me with the white passengers. There were seats on either side of the coachbox. The leader sat on one of these as a rule. Today he sat inside and gave me his seat. I knew it was sheer injustice and an insult, but I thought it better to pocket it. So, much as I fretted within myself, I prudently sat next to the coachman.

At about three o'clock the coach reached Pardekoph. Now the leader desired to sit where I was seated, as he wanted to smoke and possibly to have some fresh air. So he took a piece of dirty sack-cloth from the driver, spread it on the footboard and, addressing me said, "Sami, you sit on this, I want to sit near the driver." The insult was more than I could bear. In fear and trembling I said to him, "It was you who seated me here, though I should have been accommodated inside. I put up with the insult. Now that you want to sit

outside and smoke, you would have me sit at your feet. I will not do so."

As I was struggling through these sentences, the man came down upon me and began heavily to box my ears. He seized me by the arm and tried to drag me down. I clung to the brass rails of the coachbox and was determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wrist bones. The passengers were witnessing the scene – the man swearing at me, dragging and belaboring me, and I remaining still. He was strong and I was weak. Some of the passengers were moved to pity and exclaimed: "Man, let him alone. Don't beat him. He is right. If he can't stay there, let him come and sit with us." "No fear," cried the man, but he seemed somewhat crestfallen and stopped beating me. He let go my arm, swore at me a little more, and asking the Hottentot servant who was sitting on the other side of the coachbox to sit on the footboard, took the seat so vacated. My heart was beating fast within my breast, and I was wondering whether I should ever reach my destination alive. The man cast an angry look at me now and then and growled: "Take care, let me once get to Standerton and I shall show you what I do." I sat speechless and prayed to God to help me.

After dark we reached Standerton. I wanted to inform the agent of the Coach Company of the whole affair. So I wrote him a letter, narrating everything that had happened, and drawing his attention to the threat his man had held out. I also asked for an assurance that he would accommodate me with the other passengers inside the coach when we started the next morning. To which the agent replied to this effect: "From Standerton we have a bigger coach with different men in charge. The man complained of will not be there tomorrow, and you will have a seat with the other passengers." This somewhat relieved me. I had, of course, no intention of proceeding against the man who had assaulted me.

In the morning, I got a good seat and reached Johannes-

burg quite safely that night. Abdulla Sheth had wired to Johannesburg also, and given me the name and address of Muhammad Kasam Kamruddin's firm there. Their man had come to receive me at the stage, but neither did I see him nor did he recognize me. So I decided to go to a hotel. Taking a cab I asked to be driven to the Grand National Hotel. I saw the Manager and asked for a room. He eyed me for a moment, and politely saying, "I am very sorry, we are full up," bade me good-bye. So I asked the cabman to drive to Muhammad Kasam Kamruddin's shop. Here I found Abdul Gani Sheth expecting me, and he gave me a cordial greeting. He had a hearty laugh over the story of my experience at the hotel. "How ever did you expect to be admitted to a hotel?" he said.

"Why not?" I asked.

"You will come to know after you have stayed here a few days," said he. "Only we can live in a land like this, because, for making money we do not mind pocketing insults, and here we are." With this he narrated to me the story of the hardships of Indians in South Africa.

He said: "This country is not for men like you. Look now, you have to go to Pretoria tomorrow. You will have to travel third class. Conditions in the Transvaal are worse than in Natal. First and second class tickets are never issued to Indians."

I sent for the railway regulations and read them. I said to the Sheth: "I wish to go first class, and if I cannot, I shall prefer to take a cab to Pretoria, a matter of only thirty-seven miles."

We sent a note to the Station Master. I mentioned that I was a barrister and that I always traveled first. I also stated that I needed to reach Pretoria as early as possible, that as there was no time to await his reply I would receive it in person at the station. So I went to the station in a frock-coat and necktie, placed a sovereign for my fare on the counter and asked for a first class ticket.

"You sent me that note?" he asked.

"That is so. I shall be much obliged if you will give me a ticket. I must reach Pretoria today."

He smiled and, moved to pity, said: "I appreciate your feelings, and you have my sympathy. I do want to give you a ticket on one condition, however, that if the guard should ask you to shift to the third class, you will not involve me in the affair, by which I mean that you should not proceed against the Railway Company. I wish you a safe journey. I can see you are a gentleman." With these words he booked the ticket. I thanked him and gave him the necessary assurance.

I took my seat in a first class compartment and the train started. At Germiston, the guard came to examine the tickets. He was angry to find me there, and signaled to me with his finger to go to the third class. I showed him my first class ticket. "That doesn't matter," said he, "remove to the third class."

There was only one English passenger in the compartment. He took the guard to task. "Don't you see he has a first class ticket? I do not mind in the least his traveling with me." Addressing me, he said, "You should make yourself comfortable where you are."

The guard muttered: "If you want to travel with a coolie, what do I care?" and went away. At about eight o'clock in the evening the train reached Pretoria.

IN TOUCH WITH INDIANS

I had expected someone on behalf of Dada Abdulla's attorney to meet me at Pretoria. But the attorney had sent no one. I was perplexed, and wondered where to go, as I feared that no hotel would accept me. Pretoria station in 1893 was quite different. The lights were burning dimly. The travelers were few. I let all the other passengers go and thought that as soon

as the ticket collector was fairly free, I would hand him my ticket and ask him if he could direct me to some small hotel; otherwise I would spend the night at the station. I must confess I shrank from asking him even this, for I was afraid of being insulted.

The station became clear of all passengers. I gave my ticket to the ticket collector and began my inquiries. He replied to me courteously, but I saw that he could not be of any considerable help. But an American Negro who was standing nearby broke into the conversation. "I see," said he, "that you are an utter stranger here, without any friends. If you will come with me, I will take you to a small hotel, of which the proprietor is an American who is very well known to me. I think he will accept you."

He took me to Johnston's Family Hotel. He drew Mr. Johnston aside to speak to him, and the latter agreed to accommodate me for the night, on condition that I should have my dinner served in my room. "I assure you," said he, "that I have no color prejudice. But I have only European custom and, if I allowed you to eat in the dining-room, my guests might be offended and even go away."

"Thank you," said I, "even for accommodating me for the night. I am now more or less acquainted with the conditions here, and I understand your difficulty. I do not mind your serving the dinner in my room. I hope to be able to make some other arrangement tomorrow."

I was shown into a room, where I now sat waiting for the dinner. Instead, Mr. Johnston appeared. He said: "I was ashamed of having asked you to have your dinner here. So I spoke to the other guests about you, and asked them if they would mind your having your dinner in the dining room. They said they had no objection, and that they did not mind your staying here as long as you liked. Please, therefore, come to the dining room, if you will, and stay here as long as you wish."

I thanked him again, went to the dining-room and had a hearty dinner.

Next morning I called on the attorney, Mr. A. W. Baker. He received me very warmly and made kind inquiries. I explained all about myself. Thereupon he said: "We have no work for you here as barrister, for we have engaged the best counsel. I shall take your assistance only to the extent of getting necessary information. And of course you will make communication with my client easy for me. I have not yet found rooms for you. There is a fearful amount of color prejudice here, and therefore it is not easy to find lodgings for such as you. But I know a poor woman. She is the wife of a baker. I think she will take you and thus add to her income at the same time. Come, let us go to her place."

So he took me to her house. He spoke with her privately about me, and she agreed to accept me as a boarder at 35 shillings a week. I removed to the new lodgings. I went to my room and lay there absorbed in deep thought. There was not any immediate work for me. I informed Abdulla Sheth of it.

Hardly ever have I known anybody to cherish such loyalty as I did to the British Constitution. Not that I was unaware of the defects in British rule, but in those days I believed that British rule was on the whole beneficial to the ruled. The color prejudice that I saw in South Africa was, I thought, quite contrary to British traditions, and I believed that it was only temporary and local. I therefore vied with Englishmen in loyalty to the throne.

Tyeb Haji Khan Muhammad had in Pretoria the same position as was enjoyed by Dada Abdulla in Natal. There was no public movement that could be conducted without him. I made his acquaintance the very first week and told him of my intention to get in touch with every Indian in Pretoria. I expressed a desire to study the conditions of Indians there, and asked for his help in my work, which he gladly agreed to give.

My first step was to call a meeting of all the Indians in

Pretoria and to present to them a picture of their condition in the Transvaal. My speech at this meeting may be said to have been the first public speech in my life. I went fairly prepared with my subject, which was about observing truthfulness in business. I had always heard the merchants say that truth was not possible in business. I strongly contested the position in my speech and awakened the merchants to a sense of their duty. Their responsibility to be truthful was all the greater in a foreign land, because the conduct of a few Indians was the measure of that of the millions of their fellow-countrymen.

I had found our people's habits to be insanitary, as compared with those of the Englishmen around them, and drew their attention to it. I laid stress on the necessity of forgetting all distinctions such as Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, Christians, Gujaratis, Madrasis, Punjabis, Sindhis and so on. I suggested, in conclusion, the formation of an association to make representations to the authorities concerned in respect of the hardships of the Indian settlers, and offered to place at its disposal as much of my time and service as was possible. I saw that very few amongst my audience knew English. As I felt that knowledge of English would be useful in that country, I advised those who had leisure to learn English. I undertook to teach a class, if one was started or personally to instruct individuals desiring to learn the language.

The class was not started, but three young men expressed their readiness to learn at their convenience, and on condition that I went to their places to teach them. I agreed to suit them all. Sometimes it happened that I would go to their places only to find them engaged in their business. But I did not lose patience. None of the three desired a deep study of English, but in about eight months two learned enough to keep accounts and write ordinary business letters.

I was satisfied with the result of the meeting. It was decided to hold such meetings, may be, once a month. These were held more or less regularly, and on these occasions there

was a free exchange of ideas. The result was that there was now in Pretoria no Indian whose condition I was not acquainted with.

I now communicated with the railway authorities and told them that, even under their own regulations, the disabilities about traveling under which the Indians labored could not be justified. I got a letter in reply to the effect that first and second class tickets would be issued to Indians who were properly dressed. This was far from giving adequate relief, as it rested with the Station Master to decide who was properly dressed.

In the Orange Free State the Indians were deprived of all their rights by a special law enacted in 1888 or even earlier. If they chose to stay there, they could do so only to serve as waiters in hotels or to pursue some other such menial calling. The traders were driven away with a nominal compensation. They made representations and petitions, but in vain.

A very stringent enactment was passed in the Transvaal in 1885. It was provided under the law that all Indians should pay a poll tax of £3 as fee for entry into the Transvaal. They might not own land except in locations set apart for them, and in practice even that was not to be ownership. They had no franchise. All this was under the special law for Asiatics, to whom the laws for the colored people were also applied. Under these latter, Indians might not move out of doors after 9 p.m. without a permit.

I made an intimate study of the hard condition of the Indian settlers, not only by reading and hearing about it, but by personal experience. I saw that South Africa was no country for a self-respecting Indian, and my mind became more and more occupied with the question as to how this state of things might be improved.

The year's stay in Pretoria was a most valuable experience in my life. Here it was that I had opportunities of learning public work and acquired some measure of my capacity for it.

Here it was that the religious spirit within me became a living force, and here too I learned the secret of success as a lawyer.

I had thought of returning home by the end of the year. But God disposed otherwise.

THE CASE

Dada Abdulla's suit was for £40,000. Both parties had engaged the best attorneys and counsel. I thus had a fine opportunity of studying their work. I saw that preparation for the case would give me a fair measure of my powers of comprehension and my capacity for marshaling evidence. I made a fair study of book-keeping. My capacity for translation was improved by having to translate the correspondence, which was for the most part in Gujarati.

I saw that the facts of Dada Abdulla's case made it very strong indeed, and that the law was bound to be on his side. But I also saw that the litigation, if it were persisted in, would ruin the plaintiff and the defendant, who were relatives. No one knew how long the case might go on. Should it be allowed to continue to be fought out in court, it might go on indefinitely and to no advantage of either party. Both, therefore, desired an immediate termination of the case, if possible.

I approached Tyeb Sheth and requested him to go to arbitration. I suggested to him that if an arbitrator commanding the confidence of both parties could be appointed, the case would be quickly finished. The lawyers' fees were so rapidly mounting up that they were enough to devour all the resources of the clients, big merchants as they were. The case occupied so much of their attention that they had no time left for any other work. In the meantime mutual ill-will was steadily increasing. I also saw for the first time that the winning party

never recovers all the costs incurred. This was more than I could bear. I felt that my duty was to befriend both parties and bring them together. I strained every nerve to bring about a compromise. At last Tyeb Sheth agreed. An arbitrator was appointed, the case was argued before him, and Dada Abdulla won.

But that did not satisfy me. If my client were to seek immediate execution of the award, it would be impossible for Tyeb Sheth to meet the whole of the awarded amount; and there was an unwritten law among the Memans living in South Africa that death should be preferred to bankruptcy. It was impossible for Tyeb Sheth to pay down the whole sum of about £37,000 and costs. He meant to pay not a pie less than the amount, and he did not want to be declared bankrupt. There was only one way: Dada Abdulla should allow him to pay in moderate installments. He was equal to the occasion, and granted Tyeb Sheth installments spread over a very long period. Both were happy over the result, and both rose in the public estimation. My joy was boundless. I had learned the true practice of law. I had learned to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby – not even money, certainly not my soul.

The case having been concluded, I had no reason for staying in Pretoria. So I went back to Durban and began to make preparations for my return home. But Abdulla Sheth was not the man to let me sail without a send-off. He gave a farewell party in my honor. It was proposed to spend the whole day there. Whilst I was turning over the sheets of some of the newspapers I found there, I chanced to see a paragraph in a corner of one of them under the caption 'Indian Franchise'. It

was with reference to the Bill then before the Legislature, which sought to deprive the Indians of their right to elect members of the Natal Legislative Assembly. I was ignorant of the Bill, and so were the rest of the guests who had assembled there.

I inquired of Abdulla Sheth about it. He said: "What can we understand in these matters? We can only understand things that affect our trade. We are after all lame men, being unlettered."

I was on the point of returning home and hesitated to express what was passing through my mind in this matter. I simply said to Abdulla Sheth: "This Bill, if it passes into law, will make our lot extremely difficult. It is the first nail into our coffin. It strikes at the root of our self-respect."

"It may," echoed Sheth Abdulla. "We understand what you say. Well, then, what is your advice?"

The other guests were listening to this conversation with attention. One of them said: "Shall I tell you what should be done? You cancel your passage by this boat, stay here a month longer, and we will fight as you direct us." All the others chimed in: "Indeed, indeed. Abdulla Sheth, you must detain Gandhibhai."

The Sheth was a shrewd man. He said: "Let us *all* persuade him to stay on. But you should remember that he is a barrister. What about his fees?"

The mention of fees pained me, and I broke in: "Abdulla Sheth, fees are out of the question. There can be no fees for public work. I can stay, if at all, as a servant. I am not acquainted with all these friends. But if you believe that they will co-operate, I am prepared to stay a month longer. There is one thing, however. Though you need not pay me anything, work of the nature we contemplate cannot be done without some funds to start with. Thus we may have to send telegrams, we may have to print some literature, some touring may have to be done, the local attorneys may have to be consulted. All this cannot be done without money. And it is clear that one

man is not enough for this work. Many must come forward to help him."

And a chorus of voices was heard: "Allah is great and merciful. Money will come in. Men there are, as many as you may need. You please consent to stay, and all will be well." The farewell party was thus turned into a working committee. I worked out an outline of the campaign, and made up my mind to stay on for a month. Thus God laid the foundations of my life in South Africa and sowed the seed of the fight for national self-respect.

SETTLED

Haji Muhammad Dada was regarded as the foremost leader of the Indian community in Natal in 1893. A meeting was, therefore, held under his presidentship at the house of Abdulla Sheth, at which it was resolved to offer opposition to the Franchise Bill.

Volunteers were enrolled. Many of the local merchants were agreeably surprised to find themselves taking a share in public work. To be invited thus to take part was a new experience in their lives. In face of the calamity that had overtaken the community, all distinctions such as high and low, small and great, master and servant, Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, Christians, Gujaratis, Madrasis, Sindhis, etc., were forgotten. All were alike – the children and servants of the motherland.

The Bill had already passed, or was about to pass its second reading. In the speeches on the occasion, the fact that Indians had expressed no opposition to the stringent Bill was urged as proof of their unfitness for the franchise.

I explained the situation to the meeting. The first thing we did was to despatch a telegram to the Speaker of the

Assembly requesting him to postpone further discussion of the Bill. A similar telegram was sent to the Premier, Sir John Robinson. The Speaker promptly replied that discussion of the Bill would be postponed for two days. This gladdened our hearts.

The petition to be presented to the Legislative Assembly was drawn up. It was also proposed to obtain as many signatures to it as possible, and all this work had to be done in the course of a night. The volunteers sat up the whole night. Merchant volunteers went out in their own carriages to obtain signatures to the petition. This was accomplished in quick time and the petition was dispatched. The newspapers published it with favorable comments, it was discussed in the House. The Bill, however, was passed.

We all knew that this was a foregone conclusion, but the agitation had infused new life into the community and had brought home to them the conviction that the community was one and indivisible, and that it was as much their duty to fight for its political rights as for its trading rights.

Lord Ripon was at this time Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was decided to submit to him a monster petition. This was no small task and could not be done in a day. Volunteers were enlisted, and all did their due share of the work. Ten thousand signatures were obtained in the course of a fortnight. To secure this number of signatures from the whole of the province was no light task, especially when we consider that the men were perfect strangers to the work. Specially competent volunteers had to be selected for the work, as it had been decided not to take a single signature without the signatory fully understanding the petition. The villages were scattered at long distances. The work could be done promptly only if a number of workers put their whole heart into it. And this they did. All carried out their allotted task with enthusiasm. And it was all a labor of love, not one of them asking

for even his out-of-pocket expenses. Dada Abdulla's house became at once a caravanserai and a public office.

The petition was at last submitted. A thousand copies had been printed for distribution. It acquainted the Indian public for the first time with conditions in Natal. I sent copies to all the newspapers and publicists I knew. *The Times of India*, in a leading article on the petition, strongly supported the Indian demands. Copies were sent to journals and publicists in England representing different parties. The London *Times* supported our claims, and we began to entertain hopes of the Bill being vetoed.

It was now impossible for me to leave Natal. The Indian friends surrounded me on all sides and importuned me to remain there permanently. I expressed my difficulties. I had made up my mind not to stay at public expense. I felt it necessary to set up an independent household. I also had the idea that I could not add to the credit of the community, unless I lived in a style usual for barristers. And it seemed to me to be impossible to run such a household with anything less than £300 a year. I therefore decided that I could stay only if the members of the community guaranteed legal work to the extent of that minimum, and I communicated my decision to them.

"But," said they, "we should like you to draw that amount for public work, and we can easily collect it. Of course this is apart from the fees you must charge for private legal work."

"No, I could not thus charge you for public work," said I. "The work would not involve the exercise on my part of much skill as barrister. My work would be mainly to make you all work. And how could I charge you for that? And then I should have to appeal to you frequently for funds for the work, and if I were to draw my maintenance from you, I should find myself at a disadvantage in making an appeal for large amounts, and we should ultimately find ourselves at a standstill."

"But we have now known you for some time, and are

sure you would not draw anything you do not need. And if we wanted you to stay here, should we not find your expenses?"

"It is your love and present enthusiasm that make you talk like this. How can we be sure that this love and enthusiasm will endure for ever? And as your friend and servant, I should occasionally have to say hard things to you. Heaven only knows whether I should then retain your affection. But the fact is that I must not accept any salary for public work. It is enough for me that you should all agree to entrust me with your legal work. Even that may be hard for you."

The upshot of this discussion was that about twenty merchants gave me retainers for one year for their legal work. Thus I settled in Natal.

Practice as a lawyer remained for me a subordinate occupation. It was necessary that I should concentrate on public work to justify my stay in Natal. The despatch of the petition regarding the disfranchising bill was not sufficient in itself. Sustained agitation was essential for making an impression on the Secretary of State for the Colonies. For this purpose it was thought necessary to bring into being a permanent organization.

To find out a name to be given to the new organization perplexed me sorely. It was not to identify itself with any particular party. The Congress was the very life of India. I wanted to popularize it in Natal. Therefore I recommended that the organization should be called Congress, and on the 22nd May [1894] the [Natal Indian] Congress came into being.

Dada Abdulla's spacious room was packed to the full on that day. The Congress received the enthusiastic approval of all present. Its constitution was simple, the subscription was heavy. Only he who paid five shillings monthly could be a member. The well-to-do classes were persuaded to subscribe as much as they could. Experience showed that no one paid his subscription for the mere asking. The enthusiasm of one moment seemed to wear away the next. The members had to

be considerably dunned before they would pay in their subscriptions.

I had learned at the outset not to carry on public work with borrowed money. One could rely on people's promises in most matters except in respect of money. I had never found people quick to pay the amounts they had undertaken to subscribe. As, therefore, no work was done unless there were funds on hand, the Natal Indian Congress has never been in debt. But collecting funds was not the only thing to do. In fact I had long learned the principle of never having more money at one's disposal than necessary.

Meetings used to be held once a month or even once a week if required. Minutes of the proceedings of the preceding meeting would be read, and all sorts of questions would be discussed. People had no experience of taking part in public discussion or of speaking briefly and to the point. Everyone hesitated to stand up to speak. I explained to them the rules of procedure at meetings, and they respected them. They realized that it was an education for them, and many who had never been accustomed to speaking before an audience soon acquired the habit of thinking and speaking publicly about matters of public interest.

Knowing that in public work minor expenses at times absorbed large amounts, I had decided not to have even the receipt books printed in the beginning. I had a cyclostyle machine in my office, on which I took copies of receipt and reports. Such things I began to get printed only when the Congress coffers were full, and when the number of members and work had increased. Such economy is essential for every organization, and yet I know that it is not always exercised. That is why I have thought it proper to enter into these little details of the beginnings of a small but growing organization. Every pie was clearly accounted for. Carefully kept accounts are a *sine qua non* for any organization. Without them it falls into disrepute.

Another feature of the Congress was service of Colonial-born educated Indians. The Colonial-born Indian Educational Association was founded under the auspices of the Congress. The members consisted mostly of these educated youths. The Association served to ventilate their grievances, to stimulate thought amongst them, to bring them into touch with Indian merchants and also to afford them scope for service of the community.

The third feature of the Congress was propaganda. This consisted in acquainting the English in South Africa and England and people in India with the real state of things in Natal. With that end in view I wrote two pamphlets. The first was *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa.* It contained a statement, supported by evidence, of the general condition of Natal Indians. The other was entitled *The Indian Franchise – An Appeal.* It contained a brief history of the Indian franchise in Natal with facts and figures. I had devoted considerable labor and study to the preparation of these pamphlets, and they were widely circulated. All this activity resulted in winning the Indians numerous friends in South Africa and in obtaining the active sympathy of all parties in India.

BALASUNDARAM

The heart's earnest and pure desire is always fulfilled. Service of the poor has been my heart's desire, and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.

Although the members of the Indian Congress included the Colonial-born Indians and the clerical class, the indentured laborers were still outside its pale. The Congress was not yet theirs. They could not afford to belong to it by paying the subscription and becoming its members. The Congress could

win their attachment only by serving them. An opportunity offered itself when neither the Congress nor I was really ready for it. I had put in scarcely three or four months' practice, and the Congress also was still in its infancy, when a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding, stood before me trembling and weeping. He had been heavily belabored by his master. I learned all about him from my clerk, who was a Tamilian. Balasundaram – as that was the visitor's name – was serving his indenture under a well-known European resident of Durban. The master, getting angry with him, had lost self-control and had beaten Balasundaram severely, breaking two of his teeth.

I sent him to a doctor. In those days only white doctors were available. I wanted a certificate from the doctor about the nature of the injury Balasundaram had sustained. I secured the certificate and straightway took the injured man to the magistrate, to whom I submitted his affidavit. The magistrate was indignant when he read it, and issued a summons against the employer.

It was far from my desire to get the employer punished. I simply wanted Balasundaram to be released from him. I read the law about indentured labor. If an ordinary servant left service without giving notice, he was liable to be sued by his master in a civil court. With the indentured laborer, the case was entirely different. He was liable, in similar circumstances, to be proceeded against in a criminal court and to be imprisoned on conviction. That is why Sir William Hunter called the indenture system almost as bad as slavery. Like the slave, the indentured laborer was the property of his master.

There were only two ways of releasing Balasundaram: either by getting the Protector of Indentured Laborers to cancel his indenture or transfer him to someone else, or by getting Balasundaram's employer to release him. I called on the latter and said to him: "I do not want to proceed against you and

get you punished. I think you realize that you have severely beaten the man. I shall be satisfied if you will transfer the indenture to someone else." To this he readily agreed. I next saw the Protector. He also agreed, on condition that I found a new employer.

So I went off in search of an employer. He had to be a European, as no Indians could employ indentured labor. At that time I knew very few Europeans. I met one of them. He very kindly agreed to take on Balasundaram.

Balasundaram's case reached the ears of every indentured laborer, and I came to be regarded as their friend. I hailed this connection with delight. A regular stream of indentured laborers began to pour into my office, and I got the best opportunity of learning of their joys and sorrows.

The echoes of Balasundaram's case were heard in far off Madras. Laborers from different parts of the province, who went to Natal on indenture, came to know of this case through their indentured brethren.

There was nothing extraordinary in the case itself, but the fact that there was someone in Natal to espouse their cause and publicly work for them gave the indentured laborers a joyful surprise and inspired them with hope.

IN INDIA

I spent nearly two years and a half in Natal, mostly doing political work. I then saw that if I was still to prolong my stay in South Africa, I must bring over my family from India. I likewise thought of making a brief sojourn in the homeland and of acquainting Indian leaders with the condition of Indian settlers in South Africa. The Congress allowed me leave of absence for six months and the late Adamji Miyankhan, the well-known merchant of Natal, was appointed Secretary in my

stead. He had a fair knowledge of English. As he had mercantile dealings chiefly with the Zulus, he had acquired an intimate knowledge of the Zulu language and was well conversant with Zulu manners and customs. He was a man of very quiet and amiable disposition. He was not given to much speech. He discharged his duties with great ability. I have entered into these details in order to show, that to the holding of responsible positions, truthfulness, patience, tolerance, firmness, presence of mind, courage and common sense are far more essential qualifications than mere learning. Where these fine qualities are absent, the best literary attainments are of little use in public work.

I returned to India in the middle of 1896. As steamers from Natal were then more easily available for Calcutta than for Bombay, I went on board one bound for that city. For, the indentured laborers were embarked from Calcutta or Madras.

At the end of 24 days, I landed at Calcutta. The same day I took the train for Bombay. On my way to Bombay the train stopped at Allahabad for forty-five minutes. I decided to utilize the interval for a drive through the town. I also had to purchase some medicine at a chemist's shop. The chemist was half asleep, and took an unconscionable time in dispensing the medicine, with the result that when I reached the station, the train had just started. The Station Master had kindly detained the train one minute for my sake, but, not seeing me coming, had carefully ordered my luggage to be taken out of the train.

I decided to start work there and then. I had heard a good deal about *The Pioneer* published from Allahabad, and I had understood it to be an opponent of Indian aspirations. I have an impression that Mr. Chesney Jr. was the editor at that time. I wanted to secure the help of every party, so I wrote a note to Mr. Chesney, telling him how I had missed the train, and asking for an appointment. He immediately gave me one, at which I was very happy, especially when I found that he gave me a patient hearing. He promised to notice in his paper

anything that I might write, but added that he could not promise to endorse all the Indian demands, inasmuch as he was bound to understand and give due weight to the viewpoint of the colonials as well.

"It is enough," I said, "that you should study the question and discuss it in your paper. I ask and desire nothing but the barest justice that is due to us."

I went straight to Rajkot and began to make preparations for writing a pamphlet on the situation in South Africa. The writing and publication of the pamphlet took about a month. It had a green cover and came to be known afterwards as the *Green Pamphlet.* In it I drew a purposely subdued picture of the condition of Indians in South Africa. The language I used was more moderate than that of the two pamphlets which I have referred to before. Ten thousand copies were printed and sent to all the papers and leaders of every party in India. *The Pioneer* was the first to notice it editorially. A summary of the article was cabled by Reuter to England, and a summary of that summary was cabled to Natal by Reuter's London office. This cable was not longer than three lines in print. It was a miniature, but exaggerated, edition of the picture I had drawn of the treatment accorded to the Indians in Natal, and it was not in my words. In the meanwhile every paper of note commented at length on the question.

To get these pamphlets ready for posting was no small matter. It would have been expensive too, if I had employed paid help for preparing wrappers etc. But I hit upon a much simpler plan. I gathered together all the children in my locality and asked them to volunteer two or three hours' labor of a morning, when they had no school. This they willingly agreed to do. I promised to bless them and give them, as a reward, used postage stamps which I had collected. They got through the work in no time. That was my first experiment of having little children as volunteers. Two of those little friends are my co-workers today.

Plague broke out in Bombay about this time, and there was panic all around. There was fear of an outbreak in Rajkot. As I felt that I could be of some help in the sanitation department, I offered my services to the State. They were accepted, and I was put on the committee which was appointed to look into the question. I laid especial emphasis on the cleanliness of latrines, and the committee decided to inspect these in every street. The poor people had no objection to their latrines being inspected, and what is more, they carried out the improvements suggested to them. But when we went to inspect the houses of the upper ten, some of them even refused us admission, not to talk of listening to our suggestions. It was our common experience that the latrines of the rich were more unclean. They were dark and stinking and reeking with filth and worms. The improvements we suggested were quite simple, e.g., to have buckets for excrement instead of allowing it to drop on the ground; to see that urine also was collected in buckets, instead of allowing it to soak into the ground. The upper classes raised numerous objections to this last improvement, and in most cases it was not carried out.

The committee had to inspect the untouchables' quarters also. Only one member of the committee was ready to accompany me there. To the rest it was something preposterous to visit those quarters, still more so to inspect their latrines. But for me those quarters were an agreeable surprise. That was the first visit in my life to such a locality. The men and women there were surprised to see us. I asked them to let us inspect their latrines.

"Latrines for us!" they exclaimed in astonishment. "We go and perform our functions out in the open. Latrines are for you big people."

"Well, then, you won't mind if we inspect your houses?" I asked.

"You are perfectly welcome, sir. You may see every nook and corner of our houses. Ours are no houses, they are holes."

I went in and was delighted to see that the insides were as clean as the outsides. The entrances were well swept, the floors were beautifully smeared with cow-dung, and the few pots and pans were clean and shining. There was no fear of an outbreak in those quarters.

MEETINGS IN CITIES

Whilst busy in Rajkot with the pamphlet on South Africa, I had an occasion to pay a flying visit to Bombay. It was my intention to educate public opinion in cities on this question by organizing meetings. First of all I met Justice Ranade, who advised me to meet Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. Justice Badruddin Tyabji, whom I met next, also gave the same advice. "Justice Ranade and I can guide you but little," he said. "You know our position. We cannot take an active part in public affairs, but our sympathies are with you. The man who can effectively guide you is Sir Pherozeshah Mehta."

I certainly wanted to see Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, but the fact that these senior men advised me to act according to his advice gave me a better idea of the immense influence that Sir Pherozeshah had on the public. In due course I met him. I was prepared to be awed by his presence. I had heard of the popular titles that he had earned, and knew that I was to see the "Lion of Bombay", the "Uncrowned King of the Presidency". But the king did not overpower me. He met me, as a loving father would meet his grown up son. Our meeting took place at his chamber. He was surrounded by a circle of friends and followers. Sir Pherozeshah carefully listened to me. "Gandhi," said he, "I see that I must help you. I must call a public meeting here." With this he turned to Mr. Munshi, the secretary, and told him to fix up the date of the meeting. The

date was settled, and he bade me good-bye, asking me to see him again on the day previous to the meeting.

There had hardly been time for me to think out my speech. In accordance with Sir Pherozeshah's instructions, I reported myself at his office at 5 p.m. on the eve of the meeting.

"Is your speech ready, Gandhi?" he asked.

"No sir," said I, trembling with fear, "I think of speaking *ex tempore.*"

"That will not do in Bombay. Reporting here is bad, and if we would benefit by this meeting, you should write out your speech, and it should be printed before daybreak tomorrow. I hope you can manage this?"

I felt rather nervous, but I said I would try.

"Then, tell me, what time Mr. Munshi should come to you for the manuscript?"

"Eleven o'clock tonight," said I.

On going to the meeting the next day, I saw the wisdom of Sir Pherozeshah's advice. The meeting was held in the hall of the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Institute. I had heard that when Sir Pherozeshah Mehta addressed meetings the hall was always packed. Chiefly by the students intent on hearing him, leaving not an inch of room. This was the first meeting of the kind in my experience. I saw that my voice could reach only a few. I was trembling as I began to read my speech. Sir Pherozeshah cheered me up continually by asking me to speak louder and louder.

My old friend Keshavrao Deshpande came to my rescue. I handed my speech to him. His was just the proper voice. But the audience refused to listen. The hall rang with the cries of "Wacha," "Wacha." So Mr. [Dinshaw Edulji] Wacha stood up and read the speech, with wonderful results. The audience became perfectly quiet, and listened to the speech to the end, punctuating it with applause and cries of "shame" where

necessary. Sir Pherozeshah liked the speech. I was supremely happy.

So from Bombay I went to Poona. Here there were two parties. I wanted the help of people of every shade of opinion. First I met Lokamanya Tilak. He said:

"You are quite right in seeking the help of all parties. There can be no difference of opinion on the South African question. But you must have a non-party man for your president. Meet Professor Bhandarkar. He has been taking no part of late in any public movement. But this question might possibly draw him out. See him and let me know what he says. I want to help you to the fullest extent. Of course you will meet me whenever you like. I am at your disposal." This was my first meeting with the Lokamanya. It revealed to me the secret of his unique popularity.

Next I met Gokhale. He gave me an affectionate welcome, and his manner immediately won my heart. With him too this was my first meeting, and yet it seemed as though we were renewing an old friendship. Sir Pherozeshah had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the holy river. The Himalaya was unscalable, and one could not easily launch forth on the sea, but the Ganges invited one to its bosom. It was a joy to be on it with a boat and an oar. Gokhale closely examined me, as a schoolmaster would examine a candidate seeking admission to a school. He told me whom to approach and how to approach them. He asked to have a look at my speech. He assured me that he was always at my disposal, asked me to let him know the result of the interview with Dr. Bhandarkar, and sent me away exultantly happy. In the sphere of politics, the place that Gokhale occupied in my heart during his lifetime and occupies even now was and is absolutely unique.

Dr. Bhandarkar received me with the warmth of a father. It was noon when I called on him. The very fact that I was

busy seeing people at that hour appealed greatly to this indefatigable savant, and my insistence on a non-party man for the president of the meeting had his ready approval, which was expressed in the spontaneous exclamation, "That's it," "That's it."

After he had heard me out he said: "Anyone will tell you that I do not take part in politics. But I cannot refuse you. Your case is so strong and your industry is so admirable that I cannot decline to take part in your meeting. You did well in consulting Tilak and Gokhale. Please tell them that I shall be glad to preside over the meeting to be held under the joint auspices of the two *Sabhas*. You need not have the time of the meeting from me. Any time that suits them will suit me." With this he bade me good-bye with congratulations and blessings.

Without any ado, this erudite and selfless band of workers in Poona held a meeting in an unostentatious little place, and sent me away rejoicing and more confident of my mission.

I next proceeded to Madras. It was wild with enthusiasm. The Balasundaram incident made a profound impression on the meeting. My speech was, for me, fairly long. But the audience listened to every word with attention. At the close of the meeting there was a regular run on the *Green Pamphlet*. I brought out a second and revised edition of 10,000 copies. They sold like hot cakes.

THE STORM

From Madras I proceeded to Calcutta where I found myself hemmed in by difficulties. I knew no one there. I had of course to see Surendranath Banerji, the 'Idol of Bengal'. When I met him, he said: "I am afraid people will not take interest in your work. As you know, our difficulties here are by no means few. But you must try as best you can."

I called at the office of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The gentleman whom I met there took me to be a wandering Jew. But I was not discouraged. I kept on seeing editors of other papers. As usual I met the Anglo-Indian editors also. *The Statesman* and *The Englishman* realized the importance of the question. I gave them long interviews, and they published them in full.

Mr. Saunders, editor of *The Englishman*, placed his office and paper at my disposal. He even allowed me the liberty of making whatever changes I liked in the leading article he had written on the situation, the proof of which he sent me in advance. He promised to render me all the help he could, carried out the promise to the letter, and kept on his correspondence with me until the time when he was seriously ill. Throughout my life I have had the privilege of many such friendships, which have sprung up quite unexpectedly. What Mr. Saunders liked in me was my freedom from exaggeration and my devotion to truth. He subjected me to a searching cross-examination before he began to sympathize with my cause, and he saw that I had spared neither will nor pains to place before him an impartial statement of the case even of the white man in South Africa and also to appreciate it.

My experience has shown me that we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other party.

The unexpected help of Mr. Saunders had begun to encourage me to think that I might succeed after all in holding a public meeting in Calcutta, when I received the following cable from Durban: "Parliament opens January. Return soon."

So I addressed a letter to the press, in which I explained why I had to leave Calcutta so abruptly, and set off for Bombay. Before starting, I wired to the Bombay agent of Dada Abdulla & Co., to arrange for my passage by the first possible boat to South Africa. Dada Abdulla had just then purchased the steamship *Courland* and insisted on my traveling on that boat, offering to take me and my family free of charge. I gratefully

accepted the offer, and in the beginning of December set sail a second time for South Africa, now with my wife and two sons and the only son of my widowed sister. Another steamship *Naderi* also sailed for Durban at the same time. The agents of the Company were Dada Abdulla & Co. The total number of passengers these boats carried must have been about eight hundred, half of whom were bound for the Transvaal.

The steamer was making straight for Natal, without calling at intermediate ports. But as though to warn us of the coming real storm on land, a terrible gale overtook us whilst we were only four days from Natal. The ship rocked and rolled to such an extent that it seemed as though she would capsize at any moment. But the storm had made me one with the passengers. I had little fear of the storm, for I had had experience of similar ones. So I could move amongst the passengers, bringing them comfort and good cheer, and conveying to them hourly reports of the captain. The friendship I thus formed stood me, as we shall see, in very good stead. The ship cast anchor in the port Durban on the 18th or 19th of December. The *Naderi* also reached the same day. But the real storm was still to come.

No passengers are allowed to land at any of the South African ports before being subjected to a thorough medical examination. As there had been plague in Bombay when we set sail, we feared that we might have to go through a brief quarantine. Before the examination every ship has to fly a yellow flag, which is lowered only when the doctor has certified her to be healthy. Accordingly our ship was flying the yellow flag, when the doctor came and examined us. He ordered a five days' quarantine. But this quarantine order had more than health reasons behind it.

The white residents of Durban had been agitating for our repatriation, and the agitation was one of the reasons for the order. Dada Abdulla and Co. kept us regularly informed about the daily happenings in the town. The whites were holding

monster meetings every day. They were addressing all kinds of threats and at times offering even inducements to Dada Abdulla and Co. But Dada Abdulla and Co. were not the people to be afraid of threats. Abdul Karim Haji Adam was then the managing partner of the firm. He was determined to moor the ships at the wharf and disembark the passengers at any cost.

Thus Durban had become the scene of an unequal duel. On one side there was a handful of poor Indians and a few of their English friends, and on the other were ranged the white men, strong in arms, in numbers and in wealth. They had also the backing of the State, for the Natal Government openly helped them. Harry Escombe, who was the most influential of the members of the Cabinet, openly took part in their meetings.

The real object of the quarantine was thus to coerce the passengers into returning to India by somehow intimidating them. For now threats began to be addressed to us also: "If you do not go back, you will surely be pushed into the sea. But if you consent to return, you may even get your passage money back." I constantly moved amongst my fellow-passengers cheering them up. I also sent messages of comfort to the passengers of the SS *Naderi*. All of them kept calm and courageous.

My heart was in the combat that was going on in Durban. For I was the real target. There were two charges against me:

1. That, whilst in India I had indulged in unmerited condemnation of the Natal whites;
2. That, with a view to swamping Natal with Indians I had specially brought the two shiploads of passengers to settle there.

I knew that Dada Abdulla and Co. had incurred grave risks on my account, and the lives of the passengers were in danger. But I was absolutely innocent. I had induced no one to go to Natal. I did not know the passengers when they embarked. Neither had I said, whilst in India, a word about

the whites in Natal that I had not already said in Natal itself. And I had ample evidence in support of all that I had said.

Thus the days dragged on their weary length. At last ultimatums were served on the passengers and me. We were asked to submit, if we would escape with our lives. In our reply the passengers and I both maintained our right to land at Port Natal, and intimated our determination to enter Natal at any risk. At the end of twenty-three days the ships were permitted to enter the harbor.

THE TEST

So the passengers began to go ashore. But Mr. Escombe had sent word to the captain that, as the whites were highly enraged against me and my life was in danger, my family and I should be advised to land at dusk, when the Port Superintendent would escort us home. The captain communicated the message to me and I agreed to act accordingly. But scarcely half an hour after this, Mr. Laughton, the legal adviser of the agent company, came to the captain. He said: "I would like to take Mr. Gandhi with me, should he have no objection." He came to me and said somewhat to this effect: "If you are not afraid, I suggest that Mrs. Gandhi and the children should drive to Rustomji's house, whilst you and I follow them on foot. I do not at all like the idea of your entering the city like a thief in the night." I readily agreed. My wife and children drove safely to Rustomji's place. With the captain's permission I went ashore with Mr. Laughton. Rustomji's house was about two miles from the dock.

As soon as we landed, some youngsters recognized me and shouted "Gandhi! Gandhi!" About half a dozen men rushed to the spot and joined in the shouting. Mr. Laughton feared that the crowd might swell and hailed a rickshaw. I had

never liked the idea of being in a rickshaw. This was to be my first experience. But the youngsters would not let me get into it. They frightened the rickshaw boy out of his life, and he took to his heels. As we went ahead, the crowd continued to swell, until it became impossible to proceed further. They first caught hold of Mr. Laughton and separated us. Then they pelted me with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. Someone snatched away my turban, whilst others began to batter and kick me. I fainted and caught hold of the front railings of a house and stood there to get my breath. But it was impossible. They came upon me boxing and battering. The wife of the Police Superintendent, who knew me, happened to be passing by. The brave lady came up, opened her parasol and stood between the crowd and me. This checked the fury of the mob, as it was difficult for them to deliver blows on me without harming Mrs. Alexander.

Meanwhile an Indian youth who witnessed the incident had run to the police station. The Police Superintendent, Mr. Alexander, sent a posse of men to escort me safely to my destination. They arrived in time. The police station lay on our way. As we reached there, the Superintendent asked me to take refuge in the station, but I gratefully declined the offer. "They are sure to quiet down when they realize their mistake," I said. "I have trust in their sense of fairness." Escorted by the police, I arrived without further harm at Rustomji's place. I had bruises all over.

The whites surrounded the house. Night was coming on, and the yelling crowd was shouting, "We must have Gandhi." The quick-sighted Police Superintendent was already there trying to keep the crowds under control, not by threats, but by humoring them. But he was not entirely free from anxiety. He sent me a message to this effect: "If you would save your friend's house and property and also your family, you should escape from the house in disguise, as I suggest."

As suggested by the Superintendent, I put on an Indian

constable's uniform and wore on my head a Madrasi scarf, wrapped round a plate to serve as a helmet. Two detectives accompanied me, one of them disguised as an Indian merchant and with his face painted to resemble that of an Indian. We reached a neighboring shop by a by-lane and, making our way through the gunny bags piled in the godown, escaped by the gate of the shop and threaded our way through the crowd to a carriage that had been kept for me at the end of the street. In this we drove off to the same police station where Mr. Alexander had offered me refuge a short time before.

Whilst I had been thus effecting my escape, Mr. Alexander had kept the crowd amused by singing the tune:

Hang old Gandhi
On the sour apple tree.

When he was informed of my safe arrival at the police station, he thus broke the news to the crowd: "Well, your victim had made good his escape through a neighboring shop. You had better go home now." Some of them were angry, others laughed, some refused to believe the story. "Well then," said the Superintendent, "If you do not believe me, you may appoint one or two representatives, whom I am ready to take inside the house, If they succeed in finding Gandhi, I will gladly deliver him to you. But if they fail, you must disperse. I am sure that you have no intention of destroying Rustomji's house or of harming Mr. Gandhi's wife and children."

The crowd sent their representatives to search the house. They soon returned with disappointing news, and the crowd broke up at last, most of them admiring the Superintendent's tactful handling of the situation, and a few fretting and fuming.

Mr. Chamberlain, who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies, cabled asking the Natal Government to prosecute my assailants. Mr. Escombe sent for me, expressed his regret for the injuries I had sustained, and said: "If you can identify

the assailants, I am prepared to arrest and prosecute them. Mr. Chamberlain also desires me to do so."

To which I gave the following reply:

"I do not want to prosecute anyone. It is possible that I may be able to identify one or two of them, but what is the use of getting them punished? Besides, I do not hold the assailants to blame. They were given to understand that I had made exaggerated statements in India about the whites in Natal and calumniated them. If they believed these reports, it is no wonder that they were enraged. The leaders and, if you will permit me to say so, you are to blame. You could have guided the people properly, but you also assumed that I must have indulged in exaggeration. I do not want to bring anyone to book. I am sure that when the truth becomes known, they will be sorry for their conduct."

"Would you mind giving me this in writing?" said Mr. Escombe. "Because I shall have to cable to Mr. Chamberlain to that effect. I do not want you to make any statement in haste. I may confess, however, that if you waive the right of bringing your assailants to book, you will considerably help me in restoring quiet, besides enhancing your own reputation."

"Thank you," said I. "I had made my decision in the matter before I came to you. It is my conviction that I should not prosecute the assailants, and I am prepared this moment to reduce my decision to writing." With this I gave him the necessary statement.

On the day of landing, as soon as the yellow flag was lowered, a representative of *The Natal Advertiser* had come to interview me. He had asked me a number of questions, and in reply I had been able to refute every one of the charges that had been leveled against me. Thanks to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, I had delivered only written speeches in India, and I had copies of them all, as well as of my other writings. I had given the interviewer all this literature and showed him that in India I had said nothing which I had not already said in

South Africa in stronger language. I had also shown him that I had had no hand in bringing the passengers of the *Courland* and *Naderi* to South Africa. Many of them were old residents, and most of them, far from wanting to stay in Natal, meant to go to the Transvaal.

This interview and my refusal to prosecute the assailants produced such a profound impression that the Europeans of Durban were ashamed of their conduct. The press declared me to be innocent and condemned the mob. Thus the lynching ultimately proved to be a blessing for the cause. It enhanced the prestige of the Indian community in South Africa and made my work easier. But if it enhanced the prestige of the community, it also fanned the flame of prejudice against it. As soon as it was proved that the Indian could put up a manly fight, he came to be regarded as a danger. Two bills were introduced in the Natal Legislative Assembly, one of them calculated to affect the Indian trader adversely, and the other to impose a stringent restriction on Indian immigration.

The bills considerably increased my public work and made the community more alive than ever to their sense of duty. They were translated into Indian languages and fully explained, so as to bring home to the community their subtle implications. We appealed to the Colonial Secretary, but he refused to interfere and the bills became law.

The awakening caused by the bills and the demonstration against the passengers I turned to good account by making an appeal for membership and funds, which now amounted to £5,000. My desire was to secure for the Congress a permanent fund, so that it might procure property of its own and then carry on its work out of the rent of the property.

But my idea of having permanent funds for public institutions underwent a change [thereafter]. And now, after considerable experience with the many public institutions which I have managed, it has become my firm conviction that it is not good to run public institutions on permanent funds.

A permanent fund carries in itself the seed of the moral fall of the institution. A public institution means an institution conducted with the approval, and from the funds, of the public. When such an institution ceases to have public support, it forfeits its right to exist. Institutions maintained on permanent funds are often found to ignore public opinion, and are frequently responsible for acts contrary to it. In our country we experience this at every step. Some of the so-called religious trusts have ceased to render any accounts. The trustees have become the owners and are responsible to none. I have no doubt that the ideal is for public institutions to live from day to day. The institution that fails to win public support has no right to exist as such. The subscriptions that an institution annually receives are a test of its popularity and the honesty of its management, and I am of opinion that every institution should submit to that test. These views were confirmed during the days of the *satyagraha* in South Africa. That magnificent campaign extending over six years was carried on without permanent funds, though lakhs of rupees were necessary for it.

LONGING FOR SERVICE

My profession progressed satisfactorily, but that was far from satisfying me. The question of further simplifying my life and of doing some concrete act of service to my fellowmen had been constantly agitating me, when a leper came to my door. I had not the heart to dismiss him with a meal. So I offered him shelter, dressed his wounds, and began to look after him. But I could not go on like that indefinitely. I could not afford, I lacked the will, to keep him always with me. So I sent him to the Government Hospital for indentured laborers.

But I was still ill at ease. I longed for some humanitarian work of a permanent nature. Dr. Booth was the head of the

St. Aidan's Mission. He was a kind-hearted man and treated his patients free. Thanks to Rustomji's charities, it was possible to open a small charitable hospital under Dr. Booth's charge. I felt strongly inclined to serve as a nurse in this hospital. This meant two hours every morning. This work brought me some peace. It brought me in close touch with suffering Indians. The experience stood me in good stead, when during the Boer War I offered my services for nursing the sick and wounded soldiers.

Side by side with the effort to develop strength from within, the Indians sought such assistance as they could from India and England. If there was anyone who had realized the importance of the Indian question in South Africa before the Indians themselves and accorded them valuable support, it was Sir William Wilson Hunter. He was editor of the Indian section of *The Times*, wherein he discussed our question in its true perspective, ever since we first addressed him in connection with it. He wrote personal letters to several gentlemen in support of our cause. He used to write to us almost every week when some important question was on the anvil. This is the purport of his very first letter : "I am sorry to read of the situation there. You have been conducting your struggle courteously, peacefully and without exaggeration. My sympathies are entirely with you on this question. I will do my best publicly as well as in private to see that justice is done to you. I am certain that we cannot yield even an inch of ground in this matter. Your demand being so reasonable, no impartial person would even suggest that you should moderate it." He reproduced the letter almost word for word in the first article he wrote for *The Times* on the question. His attitude remained the same throughout. Thus our endeavors were directed in all possible quarters. The result of all this evidently was that the condition of Indians overseas became a question of first-rate importance in the eyes of the Imperial Government. This fact reacted for good as well as for evil on the other colonies. That is to say, in all the colonies where Indians had settled, they

awoke to the importance of their own position and the Europeans awoke to the danger which they thought the Indians were to their predominance.

A SACRED RECOLLECTION

I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, Hindus and Indians of other faiths. I may say that my heart has been incapable of making any such distinction. When I was practicing in Durban, my office clerks often stayed with me, and there were among them Hindus and Christians, Gujaratis and Tamilians. I do not recollect having ever regarded them as anything but my kith and kin. I treated them as members of my family. One of the clerks was a Christian, born of *panchama* [untouchable] parents.

The house was built after the Western model. Each room had chamber-pots. Rather than have these cleaned by a servant, my wife or I attended to them. The clerks who made themselves completely at home would naturally clean their own pots, but the Christian clerk was a newcomer, and it was our duty to attend to his bedroom. My wife managed the pots of the others, but to clean those used by one who had been a panchama seemed to her to be the limit, and we fell out. She could not bear the pots being cleaned by me, neither did she like doing it herself. Even today I can recall the picture of her chiding me, her eyes red with anger, and pearl drops streaming down her cheeks, as she descended the ladder, pot in hand. But I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher, and so harassed her out of my blind love for her. I was far from being satisfied by her merely carrying the pot. I would have her do it cheerfully. So I said, raising my voice: "I will not stand this nonsense in my house."

The words pierced her like an arrow. She shouted back:

"Keep your house to yourself and let me go." I forgot myself, and the spring of compassion dried up in me. I caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out. The tears were running down her cheeks in torrents, and she cried: "Have you no sense of shame? Must you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbor me. Being your wife, you think I must put up with your cuffs and kicks? For Heaven's sake, behave yourself and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this!"

I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor. Today I am in a position to narrate the incident with some detachment, as it belongs to a period out of which I have fortunately emerged. I am no longer a blind, infatuated husband. We are tried friends, one no longer regarding the other as the object of lust.

The incident in question occurred in 1898, when I had no conception of *brahmacharya* [celibacy]. It was a time when I thought that the wife was the object of her husband's lust, born to do her husband's behest, rather than a helpmate, a comrade and a partner in the husband's joys and sorrows. It was in the year 1900 that these ideas underwent a radical transformation, and with the gradual disappearance in me of the carnal appetite, my domestic life became and is becoming more and more peaceful, sweet and happy.

Let no one conclude from this narrative of a sacred recollection that we are by any means an ideal couple, or that there is a complete identity of ideals between us. Kasturbai herself does not perhaps know whether she has any ideals independently of me. It is likely that many of my doings have not her approval even today. We never discuss them, I see no good in discussing them. For she was educated neither by her

parents nor by me at the time when I ought to have done it. But she is blessed with one great quality to a very considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives possess in some measure. And it is this: willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she has considered herself blessed in following in my footsteps, and has never stood in the way of my endeavor to lead a life of restraint. Though, therefore, there is a wide difference between us intellectually, I have always had the feeling that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress.

WALKING ON THE SWORD'S EDGE

I have always been loath to hide or connive at the weak points of the community or to press for its rights without having purged it of its blemishes. Therefore, ever since my settlement in Natal, I had been endeavoring to clear the community of a charge that had been leveled against it, not without a certain amount of truth. The charge had often been made that the Indian was slovenly in his habits and did not keep his house and surroundings clean. The principal men of the community had, therefore, already begun to put their houses in order, but house-to-house inspection was undertaken only when plague was reported to be imminent in Durban.

I had some bitter experiences. I saw that I could not so easily count on the help of the community in getting it to do its own duty, as I could in claiming for its rights. At some places I met with insults, at others with polite indifference. It was too much for people to bestir themselves to keep their surroundings clean. To expect them to find money for the work was out of the question. These experiences taught me, better than ever before, that without infinite patience it was impossible to get the people to do any work. It is the reformer

who is anxious for the reform, and not society, from which he should expect nothing better than opposition, abhorrence and even mortal persecution. Why may not society regard as retrogression what the reformer holds dear as life itself? Nevertheless, the result of this agitation was that the Indian community learned to recognize more or less the necessity for keeping their houses and environments clean. I gained the esteem of the authorities. They saw that, though I had made it my business to ventilate grievances and press for rights, I was no less keen and insistent upon self-purification.

On my relief from [the Boer] war duty, I felt that my work was no longer in South Africa but in India. Friends at home were also pressing me to return, and I felt that I should be of more service in India. So I requested my co-workers to relieve me. After very great difficulty my request was conditionally accepted, the condition being that I should be ready to go back to South Africa if, within a year, the community should need me. I thought it was a difficult condition but the love that bound me to the community made me accept it.

The Lord has bound me
With the cotton-thread of love,
I am His bondslave...

sang Mirabai. And for me, too, the cotton-thread of love that bound me to the community was too strong to break. I accepted the condition and got their permission to go.

The Indians bathed me with the nectar of love. Farewell meetings were arranged, and costly gifts were presented to me. Gifts had been bestowed on me before when I returned to India in 1899, but this time the farewell was overwhelming. The gifts of course included things in gold and silver, but there were articles of costly diamond as well. What right had I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration? One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas, meant

for my wife. But even that gift was given because of my public work, and so it could not be separated from the rest.

The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things I had a sleepless night. I walked up and down my room deeply agitated, but could find no solution. It was difficult for me to forego gifts worth hundreds, [but] it was more difficult to keep them. And even if I could keep them, what about my children? What about my wife? They were being trained to a life of service and to an understanding that service was its own reward. I had no costly ornaments in the house. We had been fast simplifying our life. How then could we afford to wear gold chains and diamond rings? I was exhorting people to conquer the infatuation for jewelry. What was I now to do with the jewelry that had come upon me? I decided that I could not keep these things. I drafted a letter, creating a trust of them in favor of the community and appointing Rustomji and others trustees. In the morning I held a consultation with my wife and children. I knew that I should have some difficulty in persuading my wife, and I was sure that I should have none so far as the children were concerned. So I decided to constitute them my attorneys. The children readily agreed to my proposal. "We do not need these costly presents, we must return them to the community; and should we ever need them, we could easily purchase them," they said.

I was delighted. "Then you will plead with mother, won't you?" I asked them.

"Certainly," said they. "That is our business. She does not need to wear the ornaments. She would want to keep them for us, and if we don't want them, why should she not agree to part with them?" But it was easier said than done.

"You may not need them," said my wife. "Your children may not need them. Cajoled, they will dance to your tune. I can understand your not permitting me to wear them. But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need

them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with gifts so lovingly given."

And thus the torrent of argument went on, reinforced, in the end, by tears. But the children were adamant. And I was unmoved. I mildly put in: "The children have yet to get married. When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves. And surely, we shall not have for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if, after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then."

"Ask you? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-in-law! You who are trying to make *sadhus* of my boys from today! No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray what right have you to my necklace?"

"But," I rejoined, "is the necklace given you for your service or for my service?"

"I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them!"

These were pointed thrusts, and some of them went home. But I was determined to return the ornaments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a consent from her. The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust-deed was prepared, and they were deposited with a bank, to be used for the service of the community. I have never since regretted the step, and as the years have gone by my wife has also seen its wisdom. It has saved us from many temptations. I am definitely of opinion that a public worker should accept no costly gifts.

WITH GOKHALE

So I sailed for home. After reaching India I spent some time in going about the country. It was the year 1901 when the Congress met at Calcutta. It was my first experience of the Congress.

The volunteers were clashing against one another. You asked one of them to do something. He delegated it to another, and he in his turn to a third, and so on. And as for the delegates, they were neither here nor there. I made friends with a few volunteers. I told them some things about South Africa, and they felt somewhat ashamed. I tried to bring home to them the secret of service. They seemed to understand, but service is no mushroom growth. It presupposes the will first, and then experience. There was no lack of will on the part of those good simple-hearted young men, but their experience was nil. The Congress would meet three days every year and then go to sleep. What training could one have out of a three days' show once a year? And the delegates were of a piece with the volunteers. They had no better or longer training. They would do nothing themselves. "Volunteer, do this," "Volunteer, do that," were their constant orders.

There was no limit to insanitation. Pools of water were everywhere. There were only a few latrines, and the recollection of their stink still oppresses me. I pointed it out to the volunteers. They said point-blank: "That is not our work, it is the scavenger's work." I asked for a broom. The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine. But that was for myself. The rush was so great, and the latrines were so few, that they needed frequent cleaning; but that was more than I could do. So I had to content myself with simply ministering to myself. And the others did not seem to mind the stench and the dirt.

I also noticed the huge waste of time. I observed too, the

prominent place that the English language occupied in our affairs. There was little regard for economy of energy. More than one did the work of one, and many an important thing was no one's business at all. Critical as my mind was in observing these things, there was enough charity in me, and so I always thought that it might, after all, be impossible to do better in the circumstances, and that saved me from undervaluing any work.

The Congress was over, but as I had to meet various people in connection with work in South Africa, I stayed in Calcutta for a month. When Gokhale knew that I was to stay in Calcutta for some time, he invited me to stay with him. I thankfully accepted the invitation.

From the very first day of my stay with him, Gokhale made me feel completely at home. He treated me as though I were his younger brother. He acquainted himself with all my requirements and arranged to see that I got all I needed. Fortunately my wants were few and, as I had cultivated the habit of self-help, I needed very little personal attendance. He was deeply impressed with my habit of fending for myself, my personal cleanliness, perseverance and regularity, and would often overwhelm me with praise. He seemed to keep nothing private from me. He would introduce me to all the important people that called on him.

To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute. His private relations and friendships were all for public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity. India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him. Various people sought to interest him in different things. But he gave every one of them the same reply: "You do the thing yourself. Let me do my own work. What I want is freedom for my country. After that is won, we can think of

other things. Today, that one thing is enough to engage all my time and energy."

Gokhale used to have a horse-carriage in those days. I did not know the circumstances that had made a horse-carriage a necessity for him, and so I remonstrated with him: "Can't you make use of the tramcar in going about from place to place? Is it derogatory to a leader's dignity?"

Slightly pained, he said, "So you also have failed to understand me! I envy your liberty to go about in tramcars, but I am sorry I cannot do likewise. When you are the victim of as wide a publicity as I am, it will be difficult for you to go about in a tramcar. There is no reason to suppose that everything that the leaders do is with a view to personal comfort. I love your simple habits. I live as simply as I can, but some expense is almost inevitable for a man like myself."

He thus satisfactorily disposed of one of my complaints, but there was another which he could not dispose of to my satisfaction. "But you do not even go out for walks," said I. "Is it surprising that you should be always ailing? Should public work leave no time for physical exercise?"

"When do you ever find me free to go out for a walk?" he replied.

I had such a great regard for Gokhale that I never strove with him. Though this reply was far from satisfying me, I remained silent. I believed then and I believe even now, that, no matter what amount of work one has, one should always find some time for exercise, just as one does for one's meals. It is my humble opinion that, far from taking away from one's capacity for work, it adds to it.

TRAVELING IN INDIA

Whilst living under Gokhale's roof, I walked up and down the streets of Calcutta. I went to most places on foot. I was eager to see the Kali temple. So I went there one day. On the way, I saw a stream of sheep going to be sacrificed to Kali. We were greeted by rivers of blood. I could not bear to stand there. I was exasperated and restless. I have never forgotten that sight. I felt that the cruel custom ought to be stopped. I thought of the story of Buddha, but I also saw that the task was beyond my capacity.

To my mind, the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man. But he who has not qualified himself for such service is unable to afford to it any protection. I must go through more self-purification and sacrifice before I can hope to save these lambs from this unholy sacrifice. Today I think I must die pining for this self-purification and sacrifice. It is my constant prayer that there may be born on earth some great spirit, man or woman, fired with divine pity, who will deliver us from this heinous sin, save the lives of the innocent creatures, and purify the temple. How is it that Bengal with all its knowledge, intelligence, sacrifice, and emotion tolerates this slaughter?

Before settling down I had thought of making a tour through India traveling third class, and of acquainting myself with the hardships of third class passengers. In traveling third class I mostly preferred the ordinary to the mail trains, as the latter were more crowded and the fares in them higher. The third class compartments are practically as dirty, and the closet arrangements as bad, today as they were then. Third class passengers are treated like sheep. The indifference of the railway authorities to the comforts of the third class passengers, combined with the dirty and inconsiderate habits of the

passengers themselves, makes third class traveling a trial for a passenger of cleanly ways. These unpleasant habits commonly include throwing of rubbish on the floor of the compartment, smoking at all hours and in all places, betel and tobacco chewing, converting of the whole carriage into a spittoon, shouting and yelling, and using foul language, regardless of the convenience or comfort of fellow passengers.

I can think of only one remedy for this awful state of things – that educated men should make a point of traveling third class and reforming the habits of the people, as also of never letting the railway authorities rest in peace, sending in complaints wherever necessary, never resorting to bribes for obtaining their own comforts, and never putting up with infringements of rules on the part of anyone concerned. This, I am sure, would bring about considerable improvement. My serious illness in 1918-19 has unfortunately compelled me practically to give up third class traveling, and it has been a matter of constant pain and shame to me.

In Benares I went to the Kashi Vishvanath temple. I was deeply pained by what I saw there. The approach was through a narrow and slippery lane. The swarming flies and the noise made by the shopkeepers and pilgrims were perfectly insufferable. When I reached the temple, I was greeted at the entrance by a stinking mass of rotten flowers.

If anyone doubts the infinite mercy of God, let him have a look at these sacred places. How much hypocrisy and irreligion does the Prince of Yogis suffer to be perpetrated in His holy name?

LOVE'S LABOR LOST?

Gokhale was very anxious that I should settle down in Bombay, practice at the bar and help him in public work. I went to Bombay. Just when I seemed to be settling down as I had intended, I received an unexpected cable from South Africa: "Chamberlain expected here. Please return immediately." I remembered my promise and started for South Africa.

I believed then that enterprising youths who could not find an opening in the country should emigrate to other lands. I therefore took with me four or five such youths, one of whom was Maganlal Gandhi. I wanted to find out all those who wished to leave the trodden path and venture abroad. But as my ideals advanced, I tried to persuade these youths also to conform their ideals to mine, and I had the greatest success in guiding Maganlal.

The separation from wife and children, the breaking up of a settled establishment, and the going from the certain to the uncertain – all this was for a moment painful, but I had inured myself to an uncertain life.

I reached Durban not a day too soon. There was work waiting for me. The date for the deputation to wait on Mr. Chamberlain had been fixed. I had to draft the memorial to be submitted to him and accompany the deputation.

Mr. Chamberlain had come to get a gift of 35 million pounds from South Africa, and to win the hearts of Englishmen and Boers. So he gave a cold shoulder to the Indian deputation.

"You know," he said, "that the Imperial Government has little control over self-governing colonies. Your grievances seem to be genuine. I shall do what I can, but you must try your best to placate the Europeans if you wish to live in their midst."

The reply cast a chill over the members of the deputation. It was an eye-opener for us all, and I saw that we should start with our work *de novo*. I explained the situation to my colleagues. I added: "To tell you the truth, the work for which

you had called me is practically finished. But I believe I ought not to leave the Transvaal, so far as it is possible, even if you permit me to return home. Instead of carrying on my work from Natal, as before, I must now do so from here. I must no longer think of returning to India within a year, but must get enrolled in the Transvaal Supreme Court.

INDIAN OPINION

About this time, Madanjit approached me with a proposal to start *Indian Opinion* and sought my advice. He had already been conducting a press, and I approved of his proposal. The journal was launched in 1904, and Mansukhlal Naazar became the first editor. But I had to be practically in charge of the journal.

After all these years, I feel that the journal has served the community well. So long as it was under my control, *Indian Opinion* was a mirror of part of my life. Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns, and expounded the principles and practice of *satyagraha* as I understood it. During ten years, excepting the intervals of my enforced rest in prison, there was hardly an issue of *Indian Opinion* without an article from me. I cannot recall a word in those articles set down without thought or deliberation, or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed, the journal became for me a training in self-restraint, and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts. The critic found very little to which he could object. In fact, the tone of *Indian Opinion* compelled the critic to put a curb on his own pen. The readers looked forward to it for a trustworthy account of the *satyagraha* campaign as also of the real condition of Indians in South Africa. For me it became a means for the study of human nature in all its shades, as I always aimed at establishing an intimate and clean bond

between the editor and the readers. I was inundated with letters containing the outpourings of my correspondents' hearts. They were friendly, critical or bitter, according to the temper of the writer. It was a fine education for me to study, digest and answer all this correspondence. It was as though the community thought audibly through this correspondence with me. It made me thoroughly understand the responsibility of a journalist, and the hold I secured in this way over the community made the future campaign workable, dignified and irresistible.

I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice.

COOLIE LOCATIONS

Some of the classes which render us the greatest social service, but which we Hindus have chosen to regard as 'untouchables', are relegated to remote quarters of a town or a village. Even so, in Christian Europe the Jews were once 'untouchables' and the quarters that were assigned to them had the offensive name of ghettoes. In a similar way, today we have become the untouchables of South Africa. The Hindus have considered themselves Aryas or civilized, and a section of their own kith and kin as untouchables, with the result that a strange, if unjust, nemesis is being visited upon the Hindus in South Africa.

In South Africa we have acquired the odious name of 'coolies'. The word 'coolie' in India means only a porter or hired workman, but in South Africa it has a contemptuous connotation. It means what an untouchable means to us, and the quarters assigned to the 'coolies' are known as 'coolie locations'. Johannesburg had one such location. People were densely packed in the location, the area of which never increased with the increase in population. Beyond arranging to clean the latrines in the location in a haphazard way, the Municipality did nothing to provide any sanitary facilities, much less good roads or lights. The bulk of the Indians who went to South Africa were ignorant, pauper agriculturists. The criminal negligence of the Municipality and the ignorance of the Indian settlers thus conspired to render the location thoroughly insanitary. The Municipality, far from doing anything to improve the condition of the location, used the insanitation, caused by their own neglect, as a pretext for destroying the location. The settlers were naturally entitled to compensation. A special tribunal was appointed to try the land acquisition cases. Most of the tenants engaged me as their legal adviser.

I had worked hard for these cases. Out of about 70 cases only one was lost. The clients always surrounded me. Most of them were originally indentured laborers from Bihar and its neighborhood, and from South India. I came in intimate contact with numerous Indian settlers. I became more their brother than a mere legal adviser, and shared in all their sorrows and hardships.

The Indians were not removed from the location as soon as the Municipality secured its ownership. It was necessary to find the residents suitable new quarters before dislodging them. But as the Municipality could not easily do this, the Indians were suffered to stay in the same 'dirty' location, with this difference that their condition became worse than before. The number of tenants increased, and with them the squalor and the disorder.

While the Indians were fretting over this state of things, there was a sudden outbreak of the black plague. Fortunately it was not the location but one of the gold mines in the vicinity of Johannesburg that was responsible for the outbreak. The workers in this mine were for the most part negroes. There were a few Indians also working in connection with the mine, twenty-three of whom suddenly caught the infection, and returned one evening to their quarters in the location with an acute attack of the plague. Madanjit, who was then canvassing subscribers for *Indian Opinion*, happened to be in the location at this moment. He was a remarkably fearless man. His heart wept to see these victims of the scourge, and he sent a pencil-note to me: "There has been a sudden outbreak of the black plague. You must come immediately and take prompt measures, otherwise we must be prepared for dire consequences. Please come immediately."

Madanjit bravely broke open the lock of a vacant house, and put all the patients there. I cycled to the location. Dr. William Godfrey, who was practicing in Johannesburg, ran to the rescue as soon as he got the news, and became both nurse and doctor to the patients. But twenty-three patients were more than the three of us could cope with.

It is my faith, based on experience, that if one's heart is pure, calamity brings in its train men and measures to fight it. I had at that time four Indians in my office. So I decided to sacrifice all four – call them clerks, co-workers or sons.

It was a terrible night – that night of vigil and nursing. Dr. Godfrey's pluck proved infectious. There was not much nursing required. To give them their doses of medicine, to attend to their wants, to keep them and their beds clean and tidy, and to cheer them up was all that we had to do. The indefatigable zeal and fearlessness with which the youths worked rejoiced me beyond measure.

Once awakened to a sense of their duty, the Municipality made no delay in taking prompt measures. The next day they

placed a vacant godown at my disposal, and suggested that the patients be removed there. We raised a few beds and other necessaries through charitable Indians, and improvised a temporary hospital. The Municipality lent the services of a nurse, who came with brandy and other hospital equipment. Dr. Godfrey still remained in charge. The nurse was a kindly lady and would fain have attended to the patients, but we rarely allowed her to touch them, lest she should catch the contagion.

We had instructions to give the patients frequent doses of brandy. The nurse even asked us to take it for precaution, just as she was doing herself. But none of us would touch it. I had no faith in its beneficial effect even for the patients. With the permission of Dr. Godfrey, I put three patients, who were prepared to do without brandy, under the earth treatment, applying wet earth bandages to their heads and chests. Two of these were saved. The other twenty died. In the course of a few days we learned that the good nurse had an attack and immediately succumbed. It is impossible to say how the two patients were saved and how we remained immune, but the experience enhanced my faith in earth treatment, as also my skepticism of the efficacy of brandy, even as a medicine.

On the outbreak of the plague, I had addressed a strong letter to the press, holding the Municipality guilty of negligence after the location came into its possession, and responsible for the outbreak of the plague itself. This letter secured me Mr. Henry Polak, and was partly responsible for the friendship of Rev. Joseph Doke.

I used to have my meals at a vegetarian restaurant. Here I met Mr. Albert West. We used to meet in this restaurant every evening and go out walking after dinner. Mr. West was a partner in a small printing concern. He read my letter in the press about the outbreak of the plague and, not finding me in the restaurant, felt uneasy. I had long made it a rule to go on a light diet during epidemics. In these days I had therefore

given up my evening dinner. Lunch also I would finish before the other guests arrived. As I was engaged in nursing the plague patients, I wanted to avoid the contact of friends as much as possible. Not finding me in the restaurant for a day or two, Mr. West knocked at my door early one morning just as I was getting ready to go out for a walk. As I opened the door Mr. West said: "I did not find you in the restaurant and was really afraid lest something should have happened to you. So I decided to come and see you in the morning in order to make sure of finding you at home. Well, here I am at your disposal. I am ready to help in nursing the patients. You know that I have no one depending on me."

I expressed my gratitude and replied: "I will not have you as a nurse. If there are no more cases, we shall be free in a day or two. There is one thing however."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Could you take charge of the *Indian Opinion* press at Durban? Mr. Madanjit is likely to be engaged here, and someone is needed at Durban. If you could go, I should feel quite relieved on that score."

The very next day Mr. West left for Durban. From that day until the time I left the shores of South Africa, he remained a partner of my joys and sorrows.

The location residents were removed by special train to Klipspruit Farm near Johannesburg, where they were supplied with provisions by the Municipality. This city under canvas looked like a military camp. I used to cycle out to them daily. Within twenty-four hours of their stay they forgot all their misery and began to live merrily. Whenever I went there, I found them enjoying themselves with song and mirth. Three weeks' stay in the open air evidently improved their health. The black plague enhanced my influence with the poor Indians, and increased my responsibility.

THE MAGIC SPELL OF A BOOK

I made the acquaintance of Mr. Polak in the vegetarian restaurant, just as I had made that of Mr. West. One evening, a young man dining at a table a little way off sent me his card expressing a desire to see me. I invited him to come to my table, which he did. "I am sub-editor of *The Critic*," he said. "When I read your letter to the press about the plague, I felt a strong desire to see you. I am glad to have this opportunity."

Mr. Polak's candor drew me to him. The same evening, we got to know each other. We seemed to hold closely similar views on the essential things of life. He liked simple life. He had a wonderful faculty of translating into practice anything that appealed to his intellect. Some of the changes that he had made in his life were as prompt as they were radical.

Indian Opinion was getting more and more expensive every day. The very first report from Mr. West was alarming. He wrote: "I do not expect the concern to yield profit. I am afraid there may be even a loss. The books are not in order. There are heavy arrears to be recovered, but one cannot make head or tail of them. Considerable overhauling will have to be done."

On receipt of Mr. West's letter I left for Natal. Mr. Polak came to see me off at the station, and left with me a book to read during the journey, which he said I was sure to like. It was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.

The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. This was the first book of Ruskin I had ever read. During the days of my education I had read practically nothing outside text-books, and after I launched into active life I had very little time for reading. I cannot, therefore, claim much book knowledge.

However, I believe I have not lost much because of this enforced restraint. On the contrary, the limited reading may be said to have enabled me thoroughly to digest what I did read. Of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. The teaching of *Unto This Last* I understood to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labor, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice. I talked over the whole thing with West, described to him the effect *Unto This Last* had produced on my mind, and proposed that *Indian Opinion* should be removed to a farm, on which everyone should labor, drawing the same living wage, and attending to the press work in spare time. West approved of the proposal, and £3 was laid down as the monthly allowance per head. But it was a question whether all the ten or more workers in the press would agree to go and settle on an out-of-the-way farm, and be satisfied with bare maintenance. We therefore proposed that those who could not fit in with the scheme should continue to draw their salaries and gradually try to reach the ideal of becoming members of the settlement.

I talked to the workers in the terms of this proposal. Among the men working in the press was Chhaganlal Gandhi, one of my cousins. I had put the proposal to him. He had a wife and children, but he had from childhood chosen to work under me. He had full faith in me. So without any argument

he agreed to the scheme and has been with me ever since. The machinist Govindaswami also fell in with the proposal. The rest did not join the scheme, but agreed to go wherever I removed the press.

I do not think I took more than two days to fix up these matters with the men. Thereafter I at once advertised for a piece of land situated near a railway station in the vicinity of Durban. An offer came in respect of Phoenix. West and I went to inspect the estate. Within a week we purchased twenty acres of land. It had a nice little spring and a few orange and mango trees. Adjoining it was a piece of 80 acres which had many more fruit trees and a dilapidated cottage. We purchased this too, the total cost being a thousand pounds. Rustomji always supported me in such enterprises. He liked the project. He placed at my disposal second-hand corrugated iron sheets of a big godown and other building material, with which we started work. Some Indian carpenters and masons, who had worked with me in the Boer War, helped me in erecting a shed for the press. This structure, which was 75 feet long and 50 feet broad, was ready in less than a month. West and others, at great personal risk, stayed with the carpenters and masons. The place, uninhabited and thickly overgrown with grass, was infested with snakes and obviously dangerous to live in. At first all lived under canvas. We carted most of our things to Phoenix in about a week. It was fourteen miles from Durban, and two and a half miles from Phoenix station.

I now endeavored to draw to Phoenix those relations and friends who had come with me from India to try their fortune, and who were engaged in business of various kinds. They had come in search of wealth, and it was therefore difficult to persuade them; but some agreed. Of these I can single out here only Maganlal Gandhi's name. The others went back to business. Maganlal left his business for good to cast in his lot with me, and by ability, sacrifice and devotion, stands foremost among my original co-workers in my ethical experiments. As

a self-taught handicraftsman, his place among them is unique. Thus the Phoenix Settlement was started in 1904.

In order to enable every one of us to make a living by manual labor, we parceled out the land round the press in pieces of three acres each. One of these fell to my lot. On all these plots we, much against our wish, built houses with corrugated iron. Our desire had been to have mud huts thatched with straw or small brick houses such as would become ordinary peasants, but it could not be. Though we had paid compositors, the idea was for every member of the Settlement to learn typesetting, the easiest, if the most tedious, of the processes in a printing press. Those, therefore, who did not already know the work learned it. I remained a dunce to the last. Maganlal surpassed us all. Though he had never before worked in a press, he became an expert compositor and not only achieved great speed but quickly mastered all the other branches of press work.

We had hardly settled down, the buildings were hardly ready, when I had to leave the newly constructed nest and go to Johannesburg. On return to Johannesburg, I informed Polak of the important changes I had made. His joy knew no bounds when he learned that the loan of his book had been so fruitful. "Is it not possible," he asked, "for me to take part in the new venture?". "Certainly," said I. "You may, if you like, join the Settlement." "I am quite ready," he replied, "if you will admit me." His determination captured me. He gave a month's notice to his chief to be relieved from *The Critic*, and reached Phoenix in due course. By his sociability, he won the hearts of all and soon became a member of the family. Simplicity was so much a part of his nature that, far from feeling the life at Phoenix in any way strange or hard, he took to it like a duck takes to water.

THE ZULU 'REBELLION'

Just when I felt that I should be breathing in peace, an unexpected event happened. The papers brought the news of the outbreak of the Zulu rebellion in Natal. I considered myself a citizen of Natal. So I wrote to the Governor, expressing my readiness, if necessary, to form an Indian Ambulance Corps. He replied immediately accepting the offer. I went to Durban and appealed for men. A big contingent was not necessary. We were a party of twenty-four.

Our Corps was on active service for nearly six weeks. My heart was with the Zulus, and I was delighted, on reaching headquarters, to hear that our main work was to be the nursing of the wounded Zulus. The Medical Officer in charge welcomed us. He said the white people were not willing nurses for the wounded Zulus, that their wounds were festering, and that he was at his wits' end. He hailed our arrival as a godsend for those innocent people, and he equipped us with bandages, disinfectants, etc., and took us to the improvised hospital. The Zulus were delighted to see us.

The wounded in our charge were not wounded in battle. A section of them had been taken prisoners as suspects. The General had sentenced them to be flogged. The flogging had caused severe sores. These, being unattended to, were festering. Besides this work I had to dispense prescriptions for the white soldiers. This work brought me in close contact with many Europeans.

We were attached to a swift-moving column. It had orders to march wherever danger was reported. It was for the most part mounted infantry. As soon as our camp was moved, we had to follow on foot with our stretchers on our shoulders. Twice or thrice we had to march forty miles a day. But wherever we went, I am thankful that we had God's good work to do.

The Boer War had not brought home to me the horrors of war with anything like the vividness that the 'rebellion' did. This was no war but a man-hunt, not only in my opinion, but also in that of many Englishmen with whom I had occasion to talk. To hear every morning reports of the soldiers' rifles exploding like crackers in innocent hamlets, and to live in the midst of them was a trial. But I swallowed the bitter draught, especially as the work of my Corps consisted only in nursing the wounded Zulus. I could see that but for us the Zulus would have been uncared for.

But there was much else to set one thinking. It was a sparsely populated part of the country. Few and far between, in hills and dales, were the scattered kraals [villages] of the simple Zulus. Marching, with or without the wounded, through these solemn solitudes, I often fell into deep thought. I pondered over *brahmacharya* and its implications, and my convictions took deep root. It was borne in upon me that I should have more and more occasions for service of the kind I was rendering, and that I should find myself unequal to my task if I were engaged in the pleasures of family life and in the propagation and rearing of children.

After full discussion and mature deliberation I took the vow in 1906. I had not shared my thoughts with my wife until then, but only consulted her at the time of taking the vow. She had no objection. But I had great difficulty in making the final resolve. I had not the necessary strength. How was I to control my passions? The elimination of carnal relationship with one's wife seemed then a strange thing. But I launched forth with faith in the sustaining power of God. As I look back upon the twenty years of the vow, I am filled with pleasure and wonderment. The more or less successful practice of self-control had been going on since 1901. But the freedom and joy that came to me after taking the vow had never been experienced before 1906. But if it was a matter of ever-increasing joy, let no one believe that it was an easy thing for me.

Even [now] when I am past fifty-six years, I realize how hard a thing it is. Every day I realize more and more that it is like walking on the sword's edge, and every moment I see the necessity for eternal vigilance.

KASTURBAI'S COURAGE

Thrice in her life my wife narrowly escaped death through serious illness. The cures were due to household remedies. At the time of her first attack *satyagraha* was going on or was about to commence. She had frequent hemorrhage. A medical friend advised a surgical operation, to which she agreed after some hesitation. She was extremely emaciated, and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. It was successful, but she had to suffer much pain. She, however, went through it with wonderful bravery. The doctor and his wife who nursed her were all attention. This was in Durban. The doctor gave me leave to go to Johannesburg, and told me not to have any anxiety about the patient.

In a few days, however, I received a letter to the effect that Kasturbai was worse, too weak to sit up in bed, and had once become unconscious. The doctor knew that he might not, without my consent, give her wines or meat. So he telephoned to me at Johannesburg for permission to give her beef tea. I replied saying I could not grant the permission, but that, if she was in a condition to express her wish in the matter, she might be consulted and she was free to do as she liked. "But," said the doctor, "I refuse to consult the patient's wishes in the matter. You must come yourself. If you do not leave me free to prescribe whatever diet I like, I will not hold myself responsible for your wife's life."

I took the train for Durban the same day, and met the

doctor who quietly broke this news to me: "I had already given Mrs. Gandhi beef tea when I telephoned to you."

"Now, doctor, I call this a fraud," said I.

"No question of fraud in prescribing medicine or diet for a patient. In fact, we doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby we can save our patients," said the doctor with determination.

I was deeply pained, but kept cool. The doctor was a good man and a personal friend. He and his wife had laid me under a debt of gratitude, but I was not prepared to put up with his medical morals. "Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it."

"You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that, so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish. If you don't like this, I must regretfully ask you to remove her. I can't see her die under my roof."

"Do you mean to say that I must remove her at once?"

"Whenever did I ask you to remove her? I only want to be left entirely free. If you do so, my wife and I will do all that is possible for her, and you may go back without the least anxiety on her score. But if you will not understand this simple thing, you will compel me to ask you to remove your wife from my place."

I think one of my sons was with me. He entirely agreed with me, and said his mother should not be given beef tea. I next spoke to Kasturbai herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter. But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: "I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations."

I pleaded with her. I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited to her the instances of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no scruples about taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant. "No," said she, "pray remove me at once."

I was delighted. Not without some agitation, I decided to take her away. I informed the doctor of her resolve. He exclaimed in a rage: "What a callous man you are! You should have been ashamed to broach the matter to her in her present condition. I tell you your wife is not in a fit state to be removed. She cannot stand the least little hustling. I shouldn't be surprised if she were to die on the way. If you will not give her beef tea, I will not take the risk of keeping her under my roof even for a single day."

So we decided to leave the place at once. It was drizzling and the station was some distance. We had to take the train for Phoenix, whence our Settlement was reached by a road of two miles and a half. I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk, but I trusted in God, and proceeded with my task. I sent a messenger to Phoenix in advance, with a message to West to receive us at the station with a hammock, a bottle of hot milk and one of hot water, and six men to carry Kasturbai in the hammock. I got a rickshaw, put her into it in that dangerous condition, and marched away. Kasturbai needed no cheering up. On the contrary, she comforted me, saying: "Nothing will happen to me. Don't worry." She was mere skin and bone, having had no nourishment for days. The station platform was very large, and as the rickshaw could not be taken inside, one had to walk some distance before one could reach the train. So I carried her in my arms and put her into the compartment. From Phoenix we carried her in the hammock, and there she slowly picked up strength under hydropathic treatment.

DOMESTIC *SATYAGRAHA*

I had read in some books on vegetarianism that salt was not a necessary article of diet for man, that on the contrary saltless diet was better for the health. I had read that the weak-bodied should avoid pulses. I was very fond of them. Now it happened that Kasturbai, who had a brief respite after her operation, had again begun getting hemorrhage, and the malady seemed to be obstinate. Hydropathic treatment by itself did not answer. She had not much faith in my remedies, though she did not resist them. So when all my remedies had failed, I entreated her to give up salt and pulses. She would not agree, however much I pleaded with her, supporting myself with authorities. At last she challenged me, saying that even I could not give up these articles if I was advised to do so. I was pained and equally delighted – delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her. I said to her: "You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up these or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not."

She was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow: "Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me."

"It is very good for you to forego these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me, I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for men. You will therefore leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and a moral support to you in carrying out your resolve."

So she gave me up. "You are too obstinate. You will listen to none," she said, and sought relief in tears.

I would like to count this incident as an instance of *satyagraha*, and it is one of the sweetest recollections of my life. After this Kasturbai began to pick up quickly – whether as a result of the saltless and pulseless diet or of the other consequent changes in her food, I cannot say. But she rallied quickly, hemorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack.

As for me, I was all the better for the new denials. The year sped away and I returned to India.

THE ADVENT OF *SATYAGRAHA*

A draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance was published in *The Transvaal Government Gazette* [in 1906]. I read the draft Ordinance. It seemed to me that if the Ordinance was passed and the Indians meekly accepted it, that would spell absolute ruin for the Indians in South Africa. I clearly saw that this was a question of life and death for them. I must acquaint the reader with the details of the proposed measure which shocked me so violently. Here is a brief summary of it.

Every Indian – man, woman or child of eight years or upwards – entitled to reside in the Transvaal, must register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration. The Registrar was to note down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person, and take his finger and thumb impressions. Every Indian who failed thus to apply for registration before a certain date was to forfeit his right of residence in the Transvaal. Failure to apply would be an offence in law for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported within the discretion of the court. The certificate of registration issued to an applicant must be produced before any police officer whenever and wherever he may be required to do so. Police officers could

enter private houses in order to inspect certificates. I have never known legislation of this nature being directed against free men in any part of the world. A trader with assets running into lakhs could be deported and thus faced with utter ruin in virtue of the Ordinance.

There was held a small meeting of the leading Indians to whom I explained the Ordinance word by word and said, "This is a very serious crisis. If the Ordinance were passed and if we acquiesced in it, it would be imitated all over South Africa. As it seems to me, it is designed to strike at the very root of our existence in South Africa. It is the first step with a view to hound us out of the country. We are therefore responsible for the safety, not only of the ten or fifteen thousand Indians in the Transvaal, but of the entire Indian community in South Africa. It will not, therefore, do to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from this onslaught. But God will come to our help, if we calmly think out and carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and bearing the hardship, which such resistance brings in its train."

All present realized the seriousness of the situation and resolved to hold a public meeting. A theater was hired for the purpose. The meeting was duly held on September 11, 1906. It was attended by delegates from various places in the Transvaal. The old Empire Theater was packed from floor to ceiling. I could read in every face the expectation of something strange to happen. The most important among the resolutions passed by the meeting was the famous Fourth Resolution by which the Indians solemnly determined not to submit to the Ordinance in the event of its becoming law, and to suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission. I fully explained this resolution to the meeting and received a patient hearing. The resolution was supported by several speakers, one of whom was Haji Habib. He was deeply moved and went on solemnly to declare in the name of God that he would never submit to that law, and advised all present to do likewise. I

warmly approved of the Sheth's suggestion. But at the same time it seemed to me that the people should be told of all the consequences and should have explained to them clearly the meaning of a pledge. I rose to address the meeting. I give below a summary of my remarks.

"I know that pledges should be taken on rare occasions. A man who takes a vow every now and then is sure to stumble. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa when it would be in the fitness of things to take pledges, that crisis is surely now. There is wisdom in taking serious steps with great caution and hesitation. But caution and hesitation have their limits, and we have now passed them. The Government has taken leave of all sense of decency. We would only be betraying our unworthiness and cowardice, if we cannot stake our all in the face of the conflagration which envelops us and sit watching it with folded hands. There is no doubt, therefore, that the present is a proper occasion for taking pledges.

"A few words now as to the consequences. Hoping for the best, we may say that if a majority of the Indians pledge themselves to resistance and if all who take the pledge prove true to themselves, the Ordinance may not be passed. It may be that we may not be called upon to suffer at all. But a man who takes a pledge must be prepared for the worst. Therefore I want to give you an idea of the worst that might happen. We may have to go to jail, where we may be insulted. We may have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labor may be imposed upon us. We may be flogged by rude warders. We may be fined heavily and our property may be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today, we may be reduced to abject poverty tomorrow. We may be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in jail, some of us may fall ill and even die. In short, therefore, it is not at all impossible that we may have to endure every hardship that we can imagine, and wisdom

lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse. I may say that if the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be near. If many of us fall back under storm and stress, the struggle will be prolonged.

"I am fully conscious of my responsibility in the matter. It is possible that a majority of those present here may take the pledge in a fit of enthusiasm or indignation but may weaken under the ordeal, and only a handful may be left to face the final test. Even then there is only one course open to someone like me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely but even if every one else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would never violate my pledge. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying this out of vanity, but I wish to put you, especially the leaders upon the platform, on your guard. I wish respectfully to suggest it to you that if you have not the will or the ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated, you must not take the pledge."

The meeting heard me word by word in perfect quiet. Other leaders too dwelt upon the responsibility of the audience and at last all present, standing with upraised hands, took an oath with God as witness not to submit to the Ordinance if it became law. I can never forget the scene, which is present before my mind's eye as I write.

The workers did not let the grass grow under their feet after this great meeting. Meetings were held everywhere and pledges of resistance were taken in every place.

DEPUTATION TO ENGLAND

In the Transvaal itself we took all necessary measures for resisting the Black Act such as approaching the Local Government with memorials, etc. The spirit of the community was

then high and it was unanimous in opposition to the Ordinance. We, however, still adhered to the resolution to exhaust all appropriate constitutional remedies in the first instance. The Transvaal was yet a Crown Colony, so that the Imperial Government was responsible for its legislation. Therefore the royal assent to measures passed by its legislature was not a mere formality, but very often the King, as advised by his ministers, might withhold his assent to such measures if they were found to be in conflict with the spirit of the British constitution. On the other hand, in the case of a Colony enjoying responsible government, the royal assent to measures passed by its legislature is more often than not a matter of course.

I submitted to the community that a deputation go to England. Two of us, Mr. H.O. Ali and myself, were duly elected. The deputation waited upon Lord Elgin, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who expressed his sympathy, and promised to do for us all he could. We met as many members of Parliament as we could, irrespective of the party to which they belonged. After a stay in England of about six weeks, we returned to South Africa. When we reached Madeira, we received a cablegram that Lord Elgin had declared that he was unable without further consideration to advise His Majesty the King that the Transvaal Asiatic Ordinance should be brought into operation. Our joy knew no bounds and we built many castles in the air about the coming redress of many more grievances. But the ways of Providence are inscrutable.

We had utilized every single minute of our time in England. The sending of a large number of circulars etc. could not be done singe handed, and we were sorely in need of outside help. Money indeed does bring us this kind of help, but my experience ranging over forty years has taught me that assistance thus purchased can never compare with purely voluntary service. Fortunately for us we had many volunteer helpers. Many an Indian youth who was in England for study

surrounded us and some of them helped us day and night without any hope of reward or fame. I do not remember that any of them ever refused to do anything as being beneath his dignity, be it the writing of addresses or the fixing of stamps or the posting of letters.

But there was an English friend named Symonds who cast all these into the shade. I first met him in South Africa. He had been in India. When he was in Bombay in 1897, he moved fearlessly among the Indians affected by the plague and nursed them. It had become a second nature with him not to be daunted by death when ministering to sufferers from infectious diseases. He was perfectly free from any race or color prejudice. He believed that truth is always with the minority. It was this belief of his which first drew him to me in Johannesburg. He often humorously assured me that he would withdraw his support for me if he ever found me in a majority, as he was of opinion that truth itself is corrupted in the hands of a majority. He had read very widely. He was private secretary to Sir George Farrar, one of the millionaires of Johannesburg. He was an expert stenographer. He happened to be in England when we were there. The noble Englishman found us out as our public work had secured for us newspaper advertisement. He expressed his willingness to do for us anything he could. "I will work as a servant if you like," he said, "and if you need a stenographer, you know you can scarcely come across the like of me." We were in need of both these kinds of help, and this Englishman toiled for us day and night without any payment. He was always on the typewriter till twelve or one o'clock at night. Symonds would carry messages and post letters, always with a smile curling round his lips. His monthly income was about forty-five pounds, but he spent it all in helping his friends and others. He was about thirty years of age. He was unmarried and wanted to remain so all his life. I pressed him hard to accept some payment, but he flatly refused and said, "I would be failing in my duty if I accepted any

remuneration for this service." I remember that on the last night he was awake till three o'clock while we were winding up our business and packing our things. He parted with us the next day after seeing us off on the steamer, and a sad parting it was. Whom the gods love die young, and so did this benevolent Englishman.

For the benefit of young aspirants after public work, I note down the fact that we were so punctilious in keeping the accounts of the deputation that we preserved even such trifling vouchers as the receipts for the money spent in the steamers upon, say, soda water. I do not remember to have entered a single item under sundries when writing the detailed accounts. I have clearly observed in this life the fact that we become trustees from the time that we reach years of discretion. So long as we are with our parents, we must account to them for moneys they entrust to us. They may be sure of our rectitude and may not ask us for accounts, but that does not affect our responsibility. When we become independent householders, there arises the responsibility to our family. We are not the sole proprietors of our acquisitions; our family is a co-sharer of them. We must account for every single pie for their sake. If such is our responsibility in private life, in public life it is all the greater. I have observed that voluntary workers are apt to behave as if they were not bound to render a detailed account of the business or moneys with which they are entrusted because they are above suspicion. This is sheer nonsense, as the keeping of accounts has nothing whatever to do with trustworthiness. Keeping accounts is an independent duty, and if the leading workers of the institution which we voluntarily serve do not ask us for accounts out of a sense of false courtesy or fear, they too are equally to blame. If a paid servant is bound to account for work done and money spent by him, the volunteer is doubly bound to do so, for his very work is as a reward to him.

Responsible government was conferred on the Transvaal

on January 1, 1907. The first measure passed by the new Parliament was the budget; the second was the Asiatic Registration Act, which was an exact replica of the original Ordinance, and was rushed through all its stages at a single sitting. The disallowance of the Ordinance, therefore, was forgotten as if it was a dream. The Indians were called upon to apply for registration before July 31.

KACHHALIA AND ADAJANIA

The Indians were getting ready to put up a fight against the wicked policy of the Transvaal Government. A new body named 'The Passive Resistance Association' was started. Numerous members joined this new Association, and the community furnished it funds with a lavish hand.

My experience has taught me that no movement ever stops or languishes for want of funds. Any movement that has good men and true at its helm, is bound to attract to itself the requisite funds. On the other hand, a movement takes its downward course from the time that it is afflicted with a plethora of funds. When, therefore, a public institution is managed from the interest of investments, it is a highly improper procedure. The public should be the bank for all public institutions, which should not last a day longer than the public wish. An institution run with the interest of accumulated capital ceases to be amenable to public opinion and becomes autocratic and self-righteous.

The fateful month of July was gradually drawing to an end, and on the last day of that month we had resolved to call a mass meeting of the Indians at Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. The meeting was held in the open on the ground of the Pretoria mosque. One of the speakers was Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia, the hero, not of this chapter

alone, but of the present volume [*Satyagraha in South Africa*]. He had never before now taken a leading part in public work. He at first used to hawk piece goods. He had such sharp intelligence that he very easily grasped anything that was put to him. He solved legal difficulties with such facility as often astonished me. I have never, whether in South Africa or in India, come across a man who could surpass Kachhalia

He made a very short speech. He said, "Every Indian knows what the Black Act is and what it implies. We know how powerful the Transvaal Government is. It will cast us into prison, confiscate our property, deport us or hang us. All this we will bear cheerfully, but we simply cannot put up with this law." I observed that while saying this, Kachhalia was being deeply moved. His face reddened, the veins on his neck and on the head were swollen with the blood coursing rapidly through them, his body was shaking, and moving the fingers of his right hand upon his throat, he thundered forth: "I swear in the name of God that I will be hanged but I will not submit to this law, and I hope that every one present will do likewise." The meeting cheered him as he spoke. Many of us knew that Kachhalia only says what he means and means what he says. This great man died in 1918, four years after the struggle was over, serving the community till the last.

The reader later on will hear of Tolstoy Farm where a number of *satyagrahi* families lived. The Sheth [Kachhalia] sent his ten or twelve year old son Ali to be educated there as an example to others and in order that the boy might be brought up to a life of simplicity and service. It was due to the example he thus set that other Musalmans likewise sent their boys to the Farm. Ali was a modest, bright, truthful and straightforward boy. God took him unto Himself before his father. If it had been given to him to live, I doubt not he would have turned out to be the worthy son of an excellent father.

Sorabji [Adajania] was a Parsi. There were not perhaps more than a hundred Parsis in the whole of South Africa.

There are not more than a hundred thousand Parsis in the world, and this alone speaks volumes for their high character that such a small community has long preserved its prestige, clung to its religion and proved itself second to none in the world in point of charity. But Sorabji turned out to be pure gold. He was one of the *satyagrahis* who suffered the longest terms of imprisonment. His advice always betrayed firmness, wisdom, charity and deliberation. He was slow to form an opinion as well as to change an opinion once formed. He was quite free from the bane of narrow communalism.

Sorabji entered the Transvaal, having previously informed the Government of his intention. Sorabji informed the Police Superintendent, Johannesburg, about his arrival and let him know that he believed himself entitled to remain in the Transvaal in terms of the new Immigration Act. No reply to this letter was received, or rather the reply came after some days in the form of a summons. He was accordingly brought to the Court and sentenced to a month's imprisonment with hard labor.

THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

The Government came to think that the strength of the movement could not be broken so long as certain leaders were at large. Some of the leading men were consequently served with a notice to appear before a Magistrate. The Magistrate ordered all the accused to leave the Transvaal. The time limit expired on January 10, 1908 and the same day we were called upon to attend court for sentence. None of us had to offer any defense. All were to plead guilty to the charge of disobeying the order to leave the Transvaal. The Magistrate sentenced me to two months' simple imprisonment.

I was at once removed in custody and was then quite alone. I was somewhat agitated and fell into deep thought. Home, the Courts where I practiced, the public meeting – all these passed away like a dream, and I was now a prisoner. What would happen in two months? Would I have to serve the full term? If the people failed to fill the prisons, two months would be as tedious as an age. These thoughts passed through my mind. And they filled me with shame. How vain I was! I, who had asked the people to consider the prisons as His Majesty's hotels, the suffering consequent upon disobeying the Black Act as perfect bliss, and the sacrifice of one's all and of life itself in resisting it as supreme enjoyment! Where had all this knowledge vanished today? This second train of thought acted upon me as a bracing tonic, and I began to laugh at my own folly.

I was driven to Johannesburg jail, taken to a large cell, and in a short time was joined by my compatriots who had received the same sentence as myself.

We had been in jail for a fortnight, when Albert Cartwright, editor of *The Transvaal Leader*, a Johannesburg daily, came to see me. All the daily papers then conducted in Johannesburg were the property of one or the other of the European owners of the gold mines; but except in cases where the interests of these magnates were at stake, the editors were unfettered in the expression of their own views on all public questions. Only very able and well-known men were selected as editors. For instance, the editor of *The Daily Star* later went to England as editor of *The Times*. Albert Cartwright of *The Transvaal Leader* was as broad-minded as he was able. He had almost always supported the Indian cause in his columns. He and I had become good friends. He saw General Smuts after I was sent to jail. General Smuts welcomed his mediation. Cartwright thereupon came to see me and brought with him terms of settlement approved of by General Smuts. I did not

like the vague language of the document, but was all the same prepared to put my signature to it with one alteration.

The substance of the proposed settlement was that the Indians should register voluntarily, and not under any law; that the details to be entered in the new certificate of registration should be settled by Government in consultation with the Indian community and that, if the majority of the Indians underwent voluntary registration, Government should repeal the Black Act, and take steps with a view to legalize the voluntary registration. The draft did not make quite clear the condition which required Government to repeal the Black Act. I therefore suggested a change calculated to place this beyond all doubt from my own standpoint. Cartwright promised to place my suggestion for the change before General Smuts.

[On] the second or third day the Superintendent of Police took me to Pretoria to meet General Smuts, with whom I had a good deal of talk. He congratulated me on the Indian community having remained firm even after my imprisonment, and said, "I could never entertain a dislike for your people. But I must do my duty. The Europeans want this law. I accept the alteration you have suggested in the draft. I have consulted General Botha also, and I assure you that I will repeal the Asiatic Act as soon as most of you have undergone voluntary registration. When the bill legalizing such registration is drafted, I will send you a copy for your criticism. I do not wish that there should be any recurrence of the trouble, and I wish to respect the feelings of your people."

So saying, General Smuts rose. I asked him, "Where am I to go? And what about the other prisoners?"

The General laughed and said, "You are free this very moment. I am phoning to the prison officials to release the other prisoners tomorrow morning."

OPPOSITION AND ASSAULT

I reached Johannesburg at about 9 p.m. and went direct to the Chairman, Yusuf Mian. I suggested that a meeting should be called at once with such attendance as was possible at a very short notice. The meeting was held that very night at about 11 or 12. The audience numbered nearly a thousand, in spite of the shortness of the notice and the late hour.

I had explained the terms of the settlement to the leaders present. Every one of them, however, was troubled by one doubt, "What if General Smuts broke faith with us?" In answer to that argument I observed: "Suppose we register voluntarily, but the Government commits a breach of faith and fails to redeem its promise to repeal the Act. Could we not then resort to *satyagraha*? And if any [one] thinks that the community may not be as strong afterwards as it is today, that would mean that the present strength of the community is not real strength but is in the nature of a momentary intoxication; and if that is so, we do not deserve to win, and the fruits of victory will slip out of our hands even if we win."

I explained all the terms of the settlement to the meeting and said: "We must register voluntarily in order to show that we do not intend to bring a single Indian into the Transvaal surreptitiously or by fraud. It is necessary, indeed, that you must here raise your hands as a mark of your agreeing to the settlement, but that is not enough. As soon as the arrangements for fresh registration are completed, every one of us who raises his hand should take out a certificate of registration at once."

As soon as I finished my speech, a Pathan friend stood up and greeted me with a volley of questions: "Shall we have to give ten finger-prints under the settlement?"

"Yes and no. My own view of the matter is, that all of us should give digit impressions without the least hesitation.

But those who have any conscientious objection to giving them will not be obliged to give those impressions."

"What will you do yourself?"

"I have decided to give ten finger-prints. It may not be for me not to give them myself while advising others to do so."

"You were writing a [good] deal about the ten finger-prints. It was you who told us that they were required only from criminals. It was you who said that the struggle centered round the finger-prints. How does all that fit in with your attitude today?"

"Even now I fully adhere to everything that I have written before about finger-prints. But circumstances have now changed. I say with all the force at my command that what would have been a crime against the people yesterday is, in the altered circumstances of today, the hallmark of a gentleman."

"We have heard that you have betrayed the community and sold it to General Smuts for 15,000 pounds. We will never give the finger-prints nor allow others to do so. I swear with Allah as my witness, that I will kill the man who takes the lead in applying for registration."

"I can understand the feelings of Pathan friends. I am sure that no one else believes me to be capable of selling the community. I have already said that finger-prints will not be demanded from those who have sworn not to give them. I must confess, however, that I do not like the threat of death which the friend has held out. Whether or not he carries out his threat, as the principal party responsible for this settlement, it is my clear duty to take the lead in giving finger-prints. Death is the appointed end of all life. To die by the hand of a brother, rather than by disease, cannot be for me a matter for sorrow. And if, even in such a case I am free from the thoughts of anger or hatred against my assailant, I know that even the assailant will later on realize my perfect innocence."

After this passage-at-arms with the Pathan, the meeting

ratified the settlement with the exception of a couple of Pathans present.

On the morning of February 10, 1908, some of us got ready to go and take out certificates of registration. When I reached my office, I found Mir Alam and his companions standing outside. Mir Alam was an old client of mine, and used to seek my advice in all his affairs. He was of a large and powerful build. I noticed his angry eyes and thought that something was going to happen. Other friends arrived, and we set out for the Asiatic Office. Mir Alam and his companions followed us.

The Registration Office was less than a mile away. On our way, not more than three minutes' walk from the Registration Office, Mir Alam accosted me and asked me, "Where are you going?"

"I propose to take out a certificate of registration, giving the ten finger-prints," I replied. "If you will go with me, I will first get you a certificate, with an impression only of the two thumbs." I had scarcely finished the last sentence when a heavy cudgel blow descended on my head from behind. I at once fainted with the words "*He Rama*" (O God!) on my lips, lay prostrate on the ground and had no notion of what followed. But Mir Alam and his companions gave me more blows and kicks, some of which were warded off by Yusuf Mian and Thambi Naidoo with the result that they too became a target for attack. The noise attracted some European passers-by. Mir Alam and his companions fled but were caught by the Europeans. The police arrived in the meanwhile and took them in custody. I was picked up and carried into J. C. Gibson's private office. When I regained consciousness, I saw Doke bending over me. "How do you feel?" he asked me.

"I am all right," I replied, "but where is Mir Alam?"

"He has been arrested along with the rest."

"They should be released."

"That is all very well. But here you are in a stranger's office with your lip and cheek badly lacerated. If you will go

to my place, Mrs. Doke and I will minister to your comforts as best we can."

"Yes, please take me to your place." I was taken to this good clergyman's residence and a doctor was called in.

The second thing for me to do was to wire to the Attorney-General that I did not wish Mir Alam and others to be prosecuted for the assault upon me, and that I hoped they would be discharged for my sake. But the Europeans of Johannesburg addressed a strong letter to the Attorney-General saying that whatever views Gandhi might hold as regards the punishment of criminals, the assault was committed on the high roads and was therefore a public offence. Upon this the Attorney-General re-arrested Mir Alam and one of his companions, who were sentenced to three months' hard labor.

Dr. Thwaites examined me and stitched up the wounds in the cheek and on the upper lip. He prescribed some medicine to be applied to the ribs and enjoined silence upon me so long as the stitches were not removed. Thus speech was forbidden me, but I was still master of my hands. I addressed a short note as follows to the community and sent it for publication:

"I am well in the brotherly and sisterly hands of Mr. and Mrs. Doke. I hope to take up my duty shortly. Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was doing what was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they know. I therefore request that no steps be taken against them. Seeing that the assault was committed by Musalmans, the Hindus might probably feel hurt. If so, they would put themselves in the wrong before the world and their Maker. Rather, let the blood spilt today cement the two communities indissolubly – such is my heartfelt prayer. May God grant it."

Joseph Doke was a Baptist minister, then 46 years old, and had been in New Zealand before he came to South Africa. Some six months before this assault, he came to my office and

we had not talked many minutes before I found him familiar with all the facts of the struggle. He said, "Please consider me as your friend in this struggle. I consider it my religious duty to render you such help as I can. If I have learned any lesson from the life of Jesus, it is this that one should share and lighten the load of those who are heavily laden." We thus got acquainted with each other, and every day marked an advance in our mutual affection and intimacy.

Day and night, one or [the] other member of the family would be waiting upon me. The house became a sort of caravanserai so long as I stayed there. All classes of Indians flocked to the place to see me, from the humble hawker – basket in hand with dirty clothes and dusty boots – right up to the Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association. Doke would receive all of them in his drawing room with uniform courtesy and consideration, and so long as I lived with the Dokes, all their time was occupied either with nursing me or with receiving the hundreds of people who looked in to see me. Even at night Doke would quietly peep twice or thrice into my room. While living under his hospitable roof, I never so much as felt that it was not my home, or that my nearest and dearest could have looked after me better than the Dokes.

And it must not be supposed that Doke had not to suffer for according public support to the Indians in their struggle. Doke was in charge of a Baptist church, and depended for his livelihood upon a congregation of Europeans, among whom dislike of the Indians was perhaps as general as among other Europeans. But Doke was unmoved by it. I had discussed this delicate subject with him in the very beginning of our acquaintance. And he said, "My dear friend, what do you think of the religion of Jesus? I claim to be a humble follower of Him, who cheerfully mounted the cross for the faith that was in Him, and whose love was as wide as the world. I must take a public part in your struggle if I am at all desirous of representing Christ to the Europeans who, you are afraid, will

give me up as punishment for it. And I must not complain if they do thus give me up. My livelihood is indeed derived from them, but you certainly do not think that I am associated with them for living's sake. My cherisher is God; they are but the instruments of His almighty will. Please, therefore, stop worrying on my account. I am taking my place beside you in this struggle not to oblige the Indians but as a matter of duty. The fact, however, is that I have fully discussed this question with my dean. I gently informed him, that if he did not approve of my relations with the Indians, he might permit me to retire. But he not only asked me not to trouble myself about it but even spoke some words of encouragement. Again, you must not imagine that all Europeans alike entertain hatred against your people. You can have no idea of the silent sympathy of many with your tribulations, and you will agree with me that I must know about it situated as I am."

After this clear explanation, I never referred to the subject again.

About ten days afterwards I had recovered enough strength to move about fairly well, and I then took my leave of this godly family. The parting was a great wrench to me no less than to the Dokes.

EUROPEAN SUPPORT

As the number of Europeans who actively sided with the Indians in their struggle was fairly large, it will not, perhaps, be out of place to introduce [some of] them here to the reader. I mention the friends in order of the time when I got acquainted with them.

The first name is that of Albert West. Then there was Polak. [Both have been mentioned earlier.]

The next was Hermann Kallenbach, whom too I came to know before the struggle. He is a German, and a man of strong feelings, wide sympathies and childlike simplicity. He is an architect by profession, but there is no work, however lowly, which he would consider to be beneath his dignity. When I broke up my Johannesburg establishment, I lived with him, but he would be hurt if I offered to pay him my share of the household expenses. When we thought of accommodating the families of *satyagrahi* prisoners in Johannesburg in one place, Kallenbach lent the use of his big farm without any rent. He was arrested along with Polak and suffered imprisonment.

In Johannesburg I had at one time as many as four Indian clerks, who were perhaps more like my sons than clerks. But even these were not enough for my work. It was impossible to do without typewriting. I taught it to two of the clerks, but they never came up to the mark because of their poor English.

I was at my wits' end. Arrears were fast mounting up, so much so that it seemed impossible for me to cope with professional and public work. I was quite willing to engage a European clerk, but I was not sure to get a white man or woman to serve a colored man like myself. However, I approached a typewriters' agent and asked him to get me a stenographer. He came across a girl called Miss Dick, who had just come fresh from Scotland. She had no objection to earning an honest livelihood, wherever available, and she was in need. So the agent sent her on to me. She immediately prepossessed me.

"Don't you mind serving under an Indian?" I asked her.

"Not at all," was her firm reply.

"What salary do you expect?"

"Would £17/10 be too much?"

"Not too much if you will give me the work I want from you. When can you join?"

"This moment if you wish."

I was very pleased and straightaway started dictating

letters to her. Before very long she became more a daughter or a sister to me than a mere steno-typist. I had scarcely any reason to find fault with her work. She was often entrusted with the management of funds amounting to thousands of pounds, and she was in charge of account books. She won my complete confidence but, what was perhaps more, she confided to me her innermost thoughts and feelings. She sought my advice in the final choice of her husband, and I had the privilege to give her away in marriage. As soon as Miss Dick became Mrs. Macdonald, she had to leave me. But, even after her marriage, she did not fail to respond, whenever under pressure I made a call upon her.

But a permanent steno-typist was now needed in her place. Kallenbach introduced Miss [Sonja] Schlesin to me and said, "This girl has been entrusted to me by her mother. She is clever and honest, but she is very mischievous and impetuous. You keep her if you can manage her. I do not place her with you for the mere pay." I was ready to allow £20 a month to a good steno-typist. Kallenbach proposed that I should pay her £6 a month to begin with, and I readily agreed.

Miss Schlesin soon made me familiar with the mischievous part of herself. But in a month's time she had achieved the conquest of my heart. She was ready to work at all times whether by day or at night. There was nothing difficult or impossible for her. She was then only sixteen years of age, but she captivated the fellow *satyagrahis* by her readiness to serve. This young girl soon constituted herself the watchman and warder of the morality of the whole movement. Whenever she was in doubt as to the ethical propriety of any proposed step, she would freely discuss it with me and not rest till she was convinced of it. When all the leaders except Kachhalia were in jail, Miss Schlesin had control of large funds and was in charge of the accounts. She handled workers of various temperaments. Doke was then in charge of *Indian Opinion*. But even he, hoary-headed veteran as he was, would get the articles

he wrote for *Indian Opinion* passed by her. Pathans, Patels, ex-indentured Indians of all classes and ages surrounded her, sought her advice and followed it. Europeans in South Africa would generally never travel in the same railway compartment as Indians, and in the Transvaal they are even prohibited from doing so. Yet Miss Schlesin would deliberately sit in the third class compartment for Indians and even resist the guards who interfered with her. I feared, and Miss Schlesin hoped, that she might be arrested some day. But although the Transvaal Government were aware of her ability, her mastery over the 'strategy' of the movement, and the hold she had acquired over the *satyagrahis*, they adhered to the policy and the chivalry of not arresting her. Miss Schlesin never asked for or desired an increase in her monthly allowance of £6. I began giving her £10 when I came to know of some of her wants. This too she accepted with reluctance, and flatly declined to have anything more. "I do not need more, and if I take anything in excess of my necessities, I will have betrayed the principle which has attracted me to you," she would say, and silence me.

I could go on without end writing thus about Miss Schlesin, but I shall conclude with citing Gokhale's estimate of her. He had a wonderful power of judging men. Gokhale had come in contact with Indian and European leaders in South Africa. And while minutely analyzing for me the characters of the principal persons of the drama, he gave the pride of place among them all, Europeans as well as Indians, to Miss Schlesin: "I have rarely come across such purity, single-minded devotion to work and great determination as I have seen in Miss Schlesin. I was simply astonished how she had sacrificed her all for the Indian cause without expecting any reward whatever. And when you add to all this her great ability and energy, these qualities combine to make her a priceless asset to your movement."

The persons I have thus far mentioned were such as came in close contact with me. They could not be classed among

the leading Europeans of the Transvaal. However, this latter class too was very largely helpful. The most influential of such helpers was Mr. Hosken, a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Transvaal, and Chairman of the Committee of European Sympathizers with the *Satyagraha* Movement. When the movement was in full swing, this committee acted as mediator between the Indians and the Government.

A clergyman who had given up orders to take up the editorship of the daily *The Friend*, and who supported the Indian cause in his paper in the teeth of European opposition, was Rev. Dewdney Drew, one of the best speakers in South Africa. A similarly spontaneous helper was Vere Stent, editor of *The Pretoria News*. A mass meeting of Europeans was once held in the Town Hall of Pretoria under the presidency of the Mayor to condemn the Indian movement and to support the Black Act. Stent alone stood up in opposition to the overwhelming majority of anti-Indians and refused to sit down in spite of the president's orders. The Europeans threatened to lay hands on him, yet he stood unmoved and defiant like a lion, and the meeting dispersed at last without passing its resolution.

There were other Europeans whose names I could mention and who never missed an opportunity of doing us a good turn, although they did not formally join any association. One of these was Miss [Emily] Hobhouse, the daughter of Lord Hobhouse, who at the time of the Boer War reached the Transvaal and who single-handed moved among the Boer women, encouraged them and bade them to stand firm when Lord Kitchener had set up his infamous concentration camps in the Transvaal and the Free State. She believed the English policy in respect of the Boer War to be totally unrighteous, and therefore she wished and prayed to God for England's defeat in the war. Having thus served the Boers, she was shocked to learn that the same Boers, who had only recently resisted injustice with all their might, were now led into doing

injustice to the Indians through ignorant prejudice. The Boers looked up to her with great respect and affection, and she did her best to commend to the Boers the policy of repealing the Black Act.

The second lady was Miss Olive Schreiner. The name Schreiner is one to conjure with in South Africa, so much so that when Miss Schreiner married, her husband adopted her name. Miss Schreiner was as humble in spirit as she was learned. She knew no difference between her Negro servants and herself. Authoress of *Dreams* and many other works as she was, she never hesitated to cook, wash the pots or handle the broom. She held that, far from affecting it adversely, such useful physical labor stimulated her literary ability and made for a sense of proportion and discrimination in thought and language. This gifted lady lent to the Indian cause the whole weight of her influence over the Europeans of South Africa.

The reader may ask what fruit all this sympathy of the Europeans bore. Well, as a *satyagrahi*, I hold to the faith that all activity pursued with a pure heart is bound to bear fruit, whether or not such fruit is visible to us. And I have tried to show that all truthful movements spontaneously attract to themselves all manner of pure and disinterested help.

THE GUARD

When I was assaulted in Johannesburg, my family lived in Phoenix and were naturally anxious about me. But it was not possible for them to expend money on the journey to Johannesburg. It was therefore necessary for me to see them after my recovery. From the letters of friends, I was aware that in Natal too the settlement had been grossly misunderstood.

And therefore also I must go to Durban and remove the misunderstandings prevalent there.

A public meeting of the Indians was called in Durban. Some friends had warned me beforehand that I would be attacked at this meeting and that I should therefore not attend it at all or at least take steps for defending myself. But neither of the two courses was open to me. If a servant when called by his master fails to respond through fear, he forfeits his title to the name of servant. Service of the public for service's sake is like walking on the sword's edge. If a servant is ready enough for praise, he may not flee in the face of blame. I therefore presented myself at the meeting. I explained how the settlement had been effected, and also answered the questions put by the audience. The proceedings were nearly over when a Pathan rushed to the platform with a big stick. The lights were put out at the same time. Some of those on the platform surrounded me to defend my person. The friends who feared an assault had come to the place prepared for eventualities. One of them had a revolver and he fired a blank shot. Meanwhile, Rustomji, who had noticed the gathering clouds, went to the police station and informed Superintendent Alexander, who sent a police party. The police made a way for me through the crowd and took me to Rustomji's place.

The next day Rustomji brought all the Pathans of Durban together in the morning, and asked them to place before me all their complaints against me. I met them and tried to conciliate them, but with little success. They had a preconceived notion that I had betrayed the community, and until this poison was removed, it was useless reasoning with them.

I left Durban for Phoenix the same day. The friends who had guarded me the previous night informed me that they intended to accompany me to Phoenix.

In South Africa, I had for many years been in the habit of sleeping in the open at all times except when there was rain. I was not prepared now to change the habit, and the

self-constituted guard decided to keep watch all night. Though I had tried to laugh these men out of their purpose, I must confess that I was weak enough to feel safer for their presence. I wonder if I could have slept with the same ease if the guard had not been there. For many years I have accorded intellectual assent to the proposition that death should be welcome whenever it arrives. Still, I remember occasions in my life when I have not rejoiced at the thought of approaching death as one might rejoice at the prospect of meeting a long lost friend. Man often remains weak notwithstanding all his efforts to be strong.

A TIDE AND AN EBB

Already in 1908 General Smuts ranked as the ablest leader in South Africa, and today he takes a high place among the politicians of the British Empire, and even of the world. Many other politicians have come and gone in South Africa, but from 1907 the reins of Government have practically been held throughout by this gentleman.

The Indians registered voluntarily to the satisfaction of the Transvaal Government. The Government must now repeal the Black Act, and if they did, the *satyagraha* struggle would come to an end. This did not mean the redress of all the grievances, for which the Indians must still continue their constitutional agitation. But instead of repealing the Black Act, General Smuts maintained the Black Act on the statute book.

I did not know how I would face the community. Here was excellent food for the Pathan friend who had severely criticized me at the midnight meeting. I called a meeting of our Committee and explained the new situation to them. Some of the members said, "There you are. We have often been telling you that you believe in everything that anyone says. The community has to

suffer for your credulity in public matters. It is very difficult now to rouse the same spirit as actuated our people before. You know what stuff we Indians are made of, men whose momentary enthusiasm must be taken at the flood. If you neglect the temporary tide, you are done for."

There was no bitterness in these taunting words. I replied with a smile: "Well, my credulity is not credulity but trust, and it is the duty of every one of us, yours as well as mine, to trust our fellowmen. But I cannot concede that the enthusiasm of the community is a mere temporary effervescence. In great struggles like ours there is always a tide and an ebb. I would therefore advise you patiently to deal with the problem before us. We have to consider what we can do in case the struggle has to be resumed."

I believe this was enough to conciliate the well-intentioned skeptics who were doubtful about the resumption of the struggle.

About this time, Kachhalia began to show his mettle and come to the front. On every point he would announce his considered opinion in the fewest words possible and then stick to it through thick and thin. I do not remember a single occasion on which he betrayed weakness or doubt about the final result. A time came when Yusuf Mian was not ready to continue at the helm in troubled waters. We all with one voice acclaimed Kachhalia as our captain and from that time to the end he held unflinchingly to his responsible post. He fearlessly put up with hardships which would have daunted almost any other man in his place. As the struggle advanced, there came a stage when going to jail was a perfectly easy task for some and a means of getting well-earned rest, whereas it was infinitely more difficult to remain outside, minutely to look into all things, to make various arrangements and to deal with all sorts of men.

Later on, the European creditors of Kachhalia caught him as in a noose. Many Indian traders are entirely dependent in their trade on European firms, which sell them lakhs of rupees'

worth of goods on credit on mere personal security. That Europeans should repose such trust in Indian traders is an excellent proof of the general honesty of Indian trade. Kachhalia likewise owed large sums to many European firms, which asked him at once to meet their dues, being instigated thereto directly or indirectly by the Government. The firms gave Kachhalia to understand that they would not press for immediate payment if he left the *satyagraha* movement. But if he did not, they were afraid of losing their money as he might be arrested any time by the Government, and therefore demanded immediate satisfaction in cash. Kachhalia bravely replied that his participation in the Indian struggle was his personal affair, which had nothing to do with his trade. He considered that his religion, the honor of his community and his own self-respect were bound up with the struggle. He thanked his creditors for the support they had extended to him, but refused to attach any undue importance to that support or indeed to his trade. Their money was perfectly safe with him, and as long as he was alive he would repay them in full at any cost. But if anything happened to him, his stock as well as the book debts owing to him were at their disposal. He therefore wished that his creditors would continue to trust him as before. This was a perfectly fair argument, but it failed to impress them.

A meeting of the creditors was held in my office. I told them clearly that the pressure to which they were subjecting Kachhalia was purely political and unworthy of merchants. I showed them Kachhalia's balance sheet and proved that they could have their 20 shillings in the pound. Again, if the creditors wanted to sell the business to someone else, Kachhalia was ready to hand over the goods and the book debts to the purchaser. In agreeing to this arrangement the European merchants had nothing to lose. But the merchants at this juncture did not seek justice. They were out to bend Kachhalia. Kachhalia would not bend. Bankruptcy proceedings were

instituted against him, and he was declared an insolvent, though his estate showed a large excess of assets over liabilities.

This insolvency was perfectly honorable to him. It enhanced his prestige among the community and all congratulated him upon his firmness and courage. Many traders had submitted to the Black Act merely from a fear of insolvency.

The Europeans were dumbfounded by this first case of a respectable Indian trader welcoming insolvency and were quiet ever afterwards. In a year's time the creditors realized 20 shillings in the pound from Kachhalia's stock-in-trade, and this was the first case in South Africa to my knowledge in which creditors were paid in full from the insolvent debtor's estate. Thus even while the struggle was in progress, Kachhalia commanded great respect among the European merchants, who showed their readiness to advance to him any amount of goods in spite of his leading the movement.

A BONFIRE

We were enthusiastically engaged in educating the community. We found the people ready to resume the struggle and go to jail. Meetings were held, where we explained the correspondence which was being carried on with the Government. The weekly diary in *Indian Opinion* kept the Indians fully abreast of current events, and they were asked to hold themselves in readiness to burn the certificates if the Black Act was not repealed after all, and thus let the Government note that the community was fearless and firm and ready to go to prison. Certificates were collected with a view to making a bonfire of them.

The Government bill was about to pass through the Legislature, to which a petition was presented on behalf of the Indians, but in vain. At last an 'ultimatum' was sent to the

Government by the *satyagrahis*. The word [ultimatum] was not the *satyagrahis*' but of General Smuts who thus chose to style the letter they had addressed to him signifying the determination of the community. The General said, "The people who have offered such a threat to the Government have no idea of its power. I am only sorry that some agitators are trying to inflame poor Indians who will be ruined if they succumb to their blandishments." As the newspaper reporter wrote on this occasion, many members of the Transvaal Assembly reddened with rage at this 'ultimatum' and unanimously and enthusiastically passed the bill.

The so called ultimatum may be thus summarized: "The point of the agreement between the Indians and General Smuts clearly was that if the Indians registered voluntarily, he on his part should bring forward in the Legislature a bill to validate such registration and to repeal the Asiatic Act. It is well known that the Indians have registered to the satisfaction of the Government, and therefore the Asiatic Act must be repealed. The community has sent many communications to General Smuts and taken all possible legal steps to obtain redress, but thus far to no purpose. At a time when the bill is passing through the Legislature, it is up to the leaders to apprise the Government of the discontent and strong feeling prevalent in the community. We regret to state, that if the Asiatic Act is not repealed in terms of the settlement, and if Government's decision to that effect is not communicated to the Indians before a specific date, the certificates collected by the Indians would be burnt, and they would humbly but firmly take the consequences."

One reason why this letter was held to be an ultimatum was that it prescribed a time limit for reply.

The ultimatum was to expire on the same day that the new Asiatic Bill was to be carried through the Legislature. A meeting had been called some two hours after the expiry of the time limit to perform the public ceremony of burning the

certificates. On the grounds of the Hamidia Mosque at Johannesburg, every inch of space available was taken up by Indians. The Negroes of South Africa take their meals in iron cauldrons. One such cauldron of the largest size had been set up on a platform in a corner of the grounds in order to burn the certificates.

As the business of the meeting was about to commence, a volunteer arrived on a cycle with a telegram from the government in which they regretted the determination of the Indian community and announced their inability to change their line of action. The telegram was read to the audience. The meeting began. The chairman put the meeting on their guard and explained the whole situation to them. Appropriate resolutions were adopted. I clearly detailed the various stages of the negotiations and said: "This is going to be a protracted struggle. I would advise you to ponder and only then to take the plunge proposed today."

Mir Alam too was present at this meeting. He announced that he had done wrong to assault me as he did and, to the great joy of the audience, handed his original certificate to be burnt. I took hold of his hand, pressed it with joy.

The Committee had already received upwards of 2,000 certificates to be burnt. These were all thrown into the cauldron, saturated with paraffin and set ablaze. The whole assembly rose to their feet and made the place resound with the echoes of their continuous cheers during the burning process.

THE TRIAL

Men who might be considered illiterate distinguished themselves in South Africa. Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians there worked harmoniously together and traders, 'educated' men and others fulfilled their duty. The movement

was now in full swing. There were many arrests. Jails began to be filled.

Among those who thus courted arrest was Imam Abdul Kadar Bavazir, who was arrested for hawking without a license and sentenced. Imam Saheb never walked barefooted, was fond of the good things of the earth, had a Malay wife, kept a well-furnished house and went about in a horse carriage. After he was released, Imam Saheb went to jail again, lived there as an ideal prisoner. At home he would have new dishes and delicacies every day; in jail he took mealie pap [porridge made from ground maize] and thanked God for it. Not only was he not defeated, but he became simple in habits. As a prisoner he broke stones, and worked as a sweeper.

There were many such who experienced self-purification in jail. Many lads sixteen years old went to jail. The jail authorities left no stone unturned to harass the Indians, who were given scavenger's work, but they did it with a smile on their face. They were asked to break stones, and they broke stones with the name of Allah or Rama on their lips. They were made to dig tanks and put upon pick-axe work in stony ground. Their hands became hardened with the work. Some of them even fainted under unbearable hardships.

But the Indians would not take a defeat. Government was in a quandary. How many Indians could be sent to jail after all? And then it meant additional expenditure. The Government began to cast about for other means of dealing with the situation. The obnoxious Acts provided for three kinds of punishment, viz., fine, imprisonment and deportation. The jails were already overcrowded. The Government thought that the Indians would be thoroughly demoralized if they could be deported to India [and] sent a large batch of Indians to India. These deportees suffered great hardships. Some of them had their property and their business in South Africa, many had their families there. All this notwithstanding, many Indians

remained perfectly firm. Many more however weakened and ceased to court arrest.

Many of those deported to India were poor and simple folk who had joined the movement from mere faith. That these should be oppressed so heavily was almost too much to bear. Many of them had no relations in India. Some were even born in South Africa, and to all, India was something like a strange land. It would be sheer cruelty if these helpless people upon being landed in India were left to shift for themselves. We therefore assured them that all suitable arrangements would be made for them in India. But this was not enough. The deportees could not be comforted so long as someone was not sent with them to be their companion and guide. This was the first batch of deportees, and their steamer was to start in a few hours. There was not much time. I thought of P. K. Naidoo, one of my co-workers, and asked him: "Will you escort these poor brothers to India?"

"Why not?"

"But the steamer is starting just now."

"Let it."

"What about your clothes?"

"The suit I have on will suffice."

There and then I procured some clothes and blankets for Naidoo and sent him on. Naidoo was born in South Africa and had never been to India before. I gave him a letter of recommendation to Natesan and also sent a cablegram.

In those days Natesan perhaps stood alone in India as a student of the grievances of Indians abroad, their valued helper, and a well-informed exponent of their case. I had regular correspondence with him. When the deportees reached Madras, Natesan rendered them full assistance. He found his task easier for the presence of an able man like Naidoo among the deportees. He made local collections and did not allow the deportees to feel for a moment that they had been deported.

These deportations were as illegal as they were cruel.

Governments often deliberately violate their own laws. The Indians started a powerful agitation against this lawlessness of the local Government, which was adversely commented upon in India too so that the Government found it more and more difficult to deport poor Indians. The Indians successfully appealed against the deportations, with the result that Government had to stop the practice of deporting to India.

Government had done their utmost to harass the *satyagrahi* prisoners. Winter in the Transvaal is very severe; the cold is so bitter that one's hands are almost frozen while working in the morning. Winter therefore was a hard time for the prisoners, some of whom were kept in a road camp where no one could even go and see them. One of these was a young *satyagrahi*, eighteen years old, of the name of Swami Nagappan, who observed the jail rules and did the task entrusted to him. Early in the morning he was taken to work on the roads where he contracted double pneumonia of which he died after he was released. Nagappan's companions say that he thought of the struggle and struggle alone till he breathed his last. He never repented of going to jail and embraced death for his country's sake. Nagappan was by no means an educated man. Still if we consider his fortitude, his patience, his patriotism, his firmness unto death, there is nothing left which we might desire him to possess. The *satyagraha* movement went on successfully though it was not joined by any highly educated men, but where would it have been without soldiers like Nagappan?

As Nagappan died of ill-treatment in jail, the hardships of deportation proved to be the death of Narayanaswami. Still the community stood unmoved; only weaklings slipped away.

Thus, day by day the trial grew more and more severe for the Indians. Government became more and more violent in proportion to the strength put forth by the community. There are always special prisons where prisoners whom Government wants to bend are kept. One of these was the

Diepkloof Convict Prison, where there was a harsh jailer, and where the labor exacted from prisoners was also hard. And yet there were Indians who successfully performed their allotted task. But though they were prepared to work, they would not put up with the insult offered to them by the jailer and therefore went on hunger strike. They solemnly declared that they would take no food until either the jailer was removed from the prison, or else they themselves were transferred to another prison. They succeeded in getting themselves transferred to another prison after a seven days' fast.

A SECOND DEPUTATION

There was sometimes a lull and then a storm, but both the parties had somewhat weakened. In order that not a single avenue might remain unexplored, the Indians resolved to send once again a deputation to England. On this occasion, Haji Habib was appointed as my colleague on the deputation. Merriman, the veteran statesman of South Africa, was our fellow passenger on board SS *Kenilworth Castle*, which took us to England. General Smuts and others were already in England.

There were many discussions, and we interviewed a large number of people. Lord Ampthill rendered us invaluable help. He used to meet Merriman, General Botha and others and at last he brought a message from the General. Said he: "General Botha appreciates your feelings in the matter, and is willing to grant you minor demands. But he is not ready to repeal the Asiatic Act. He also refuses to remove the color bar which has been set up in the law of the land. To maintain the racial bar is a matter of principle with the General and even if he felt like doing away with it, the South African Europeans would never listen to him. General Smuts is of the same mind as General Botha, and this is their final decision and final offer.

If you ask for more, you will only be inviting trouble for yourself as well as for your people."

And after delivering the message Lord Ampthill said, "You see that General Botha concedes all your practical demands, and in this work-a-day world we must always give and take. We cannot have everything that we desire. I would therefore strongly advise you to close with this offer. If you wish to fight for principle's sake, you may do so later on. You think over this, and let me have your reply at your convenience."

Upon hearing this I looked to Sheth Haji Habib, who said, "Tell him from me that I accept General Botha's offer on behalf of the conciliation party. I do not like the community to suffer any more. The party I represent constitutes the majority of the community, and it also holds the major portion of the community's wealth."

I translated the Sheth's sentences word by word, and then on behalf of the *satyagrahis* I said: "We are both highly obliged to you for the trouble you have taken. My colleague is right when he says that he represents a numerically and financially stronger section. The Indians for whom I speak are comparatively poor and [of] inferior numbers, but they are resolute unto death. We have an idea of General Botha's might, but we attach still greater weight to our pledge, and therefore we are ready to face the worst in the act of abiding by it. We will be patient in the confidence that if we stick to our solemn resolution, God in whose name we have made it will see to its fulfillment.

"I can grasp your position fully. You have done much for us. We will not take it ill if you now withhold your support from a handful of *satyagrahis*. Nor will we forget the debt of gratitude under which you have laid us. But we trust that you will excuse us for our inability to accept your advice. You may certainly tell General Botha how the Sheth and myself have received his offer and inform him that the *satyagrahis* though in a minority will

observe their pledge and hope in the end to soften his heart by their self-suffering and to induce him to repeal Asiatic Act."

Lord Ampthill replied: "You must not suppose that I will give you up. Yours is a righteous struggle, and you are fighting with clean weapons. How can I possibly give you up? But you can realize my delicate position. The suffering, if any, must be borne by you alone, and therefore it is my duty to advise you to accept any settlement possible in the circumstances. But if you, who have to suffer, are prepared to undergo any amount of suffering for principle's sake, I must not only not come in your way but even congratulate you. I will therefore continue as President of your Committee and help you to the best of my ability. But you must remember that I am but a junior member of the House of Lords, and do not command much influence. However, you may rest assured that what little influence I possess will be continually exerted on your behalf."

We were both pleased to hear these words of encouragement.

During my stay in England I had occasion to talk with many Indian anarchists. My booklet *Indian Home Rule*, written during my return voyage to South Africa on board SS *Kildonan Castle* (November 1909) and published soon afterwards in *Indian Opinion*, had its birth from the necessity of having to meet their arguments as well as to solve the difficulties of Indians in South Africa who held similar views.

TOLSTOY FARM

The principle called *satyagraha* came into being before that name was invented. Indeed, when it was born I myself could not say what it was. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle. But I could not for the life of me find out a new name, and therefore

offered a nominal prize through *Indian Opinion* to the reader who made the best suggestion on the subject. As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word *Sadagraha* (*sat*=truth, *agraha*=firmness) and won the prize. But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to *satyagraha* [insistence for truth] which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle.

My ideas about *satyagraha* had now matured and I had realized its universality. But I was not free from anxiety on the score of finance. It was indeed hard to prosecute a long protracted struggle without funds. I did not realize then as clearly as I do now that a struggle can be carried on without funds, that money very often spoils a righteous fight. God relieved me from the financial difficulty. As I set my foot in Cape Town I received a cable from England that Ratanji Jamshedji Tata had given Rs. 25,000 to the *satyagraha* funds. This sum amply sufficed for our immediate needs.

The *satyagrahis* now saw that no one could tell how long the struggle would last. On the one hand there were the Boer Generals determined not to yield even an inch of ground and on the other there was a handful of *satyagrahis* pledged to fight unto death or victory. It was like a war between ants and the elephant who could crush thousands of them under each of his feet. Fighting meant imprisonment or deportation for them. But what about their families in the meanwhile? No one would engage as an employee a man who was constantly going to jail. How was he to maintain himself as well as those dependent on him?

Till now, the families of jail-going *satyagrahis* were maintained by a system of monthly allowances in cash according to their need. The principle generally observed was, that each family was asked to name the minimum amount adequate to their needs and was paid accordingly on trust. I saw that at this rate the movement could not be conducted for any length of time. There was always the risk of injustice being done to

the deserving, and undue advantage being taken by the unscrupulous. There was only one solution for this difficulty, namely, that all the families should be kept at one place and should become members of a sort of cooperative commonwealth. Public funds would be largely saved and the families of *satyagrahis* would be trained to live a new and simple life in harmony with one another. Indians belonging to various provinces and professing diverse faiths would have an opportunity of living together.

But where was the place suitable for a settlement of this nature? It would not be easy to live a simple life amidst the varied distractions of a city. Again in a city it would be impossible to find a place where many families could prosecute some useful industry in their own homes.

Kallenbach bought a farm of about 1,100 acres and gave the use of it to *satyagrahis* free of any charge (May 30, 1910). Upon the farm there were nearly one thousand fruit-bearing trees and a small house at the foot of a hill with accommodation for half-a-dozen persons. Water was supplied from two wells as well as from a spring. The nearest railway station, Lawley, was about a mile from the farm and Johannesburg was twenty-one miles distant. We decided to build houses upon this Farm and to invite the families of *satyagrahis* to settle there. Upon the Farm, oranges, apricots and plums grew in such abundance that during the season the *satyagrahis* could have their fill of the fruit and yet have a surplus. The spring was about 500 yards away from our quarters, and the water had to be fetched on carrying poles.

Here we insisted that we should not have any servants either for the household work or, as far as might be, even for the farming and building operations. Everything therefore from cooking to scavenging was done with our own hands. As regards accommodation for families, we resolved from the first that the men and women should be housed separately. The houses therefore were to be built in two separate blocks, each

at some distance from the other. For the time it was considered sufficient to provide accommodation for ten women and sixty men. Then again we had to erect a house for Kallenbach and by its side a school house, as well as a workshop for carpentry, shoemaking etc.

The settlers hailed from Gujarat, Tamilnad, Andhradesh and North India, and there were Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians among them. The Christian and other women were meat-eaters. Kallenbach and I thought it desirable to exclude meat from the Farm. But how could we ask people, who had been habituated to taking meat since childhood and who were coming over here in their days of adversity, to give up meat even temporarily? But if they were given meat, would not that swell our cost of living? Again should those who were accustomed to take beef be given that too? How many separate kitchens must be run in that case?

I did not take long clearly to visualize my duty in these circumstances. If the Christians and Musalmans asked even for beef, that too must be provided for them. To refuse them admission to the Farm was absolutely out of the question. The Musalman friends had already granted me permission to have a purely vegetarian kitchen. I had now to approach Christian sisters whose husbands or sons were in jail. I represented to the sisters the difficulty of housing accommodation as well as of finance. At the same time I assured them that even beef would be provided for them if they wanted it. The sisters kindly consented not to have meat, and the cooking department was placed in their charge. The food was to be the simplest possible. There was to be one single kitchen, and all were to dine in a single row. I must state that *satyagrahis* lived on Tolstoy Farm for a long time, but neither the women nor the men ever asked for meat. Drink, smoking etc. were totally prohibited.

We wanted to be self-reliant as far as possible even in erecting buildings. Our architect was Kallenbach of course, and he got hold of a mason. A carpenter volunteered his services

free of charge and brought other carpenters to work at reduced rates. As regards unskilled labor, the settlers worked with their own hands. Some of us who had supple limbs literally worked wonders. The weak became strong on Tolstoy Farm and labor proved to be a tonic for all.

Everyone had to go to Johannesburg on some errand or other. Children liked to go there just for the fun of it. I also had to go there on business. We therefore made a rule that we could go there by rail only on the public business of our little commonwealth, and then too travel third class. Any one who wanted to go on a pleasure trip must to go on foot, and carry home-made provisions with him. No one might spend anything on his food in the city. Had it not been for these drastic rules, the money saved by living in a rural locality would have been wasted in railway fares and city picnics. The provisions carried were of the simplest: home-baked bread made from coarse wheat flour ground at home, from which the bran was not removed, groundnut butter also prepared at home, and home-made marmalade. Groundnut butter was made by roasting and then grinding groundnuts, and was four times cheaper than ordinary butter. As for the oranges, we had plenty of them on the Farm.

Any one who wished to go to Johannesburg went there on foot. We saved hundreds of rupees by this one rule of going on foot, and those who thus went walking were much benefited. Some newly acquired the habit of walking. The general practice was that the sojourner should rise at two o'clock and start at half past two. He would reach Johannesburg in six to seven hours. This discipline was accepted cheerfully. It would have been impossible to have a single settler if force had been employed. The youngsters thoroughly enjoyed the work on the Farm and the errands to the city. No more work was given to them than what they willingly and cheerfully rendered, and I never found that the work thus done was unsatisfactory either in quantity or in quality.

In spite of the large number of settlers, one could not find refuse or dirt anywhere on the Farm. All rubbish was buried in trenches sunk for the purpose. All waste water was collected in buckets and used to water the trees. Leavings of food and vegetable refuse were utilized as manure. A square pit one foot and a half deep was sunk near the house to receive the night soil, which was fully covered with the excavated earth and which therefore did not give out any smell. There were no flies, and no one would imagine that night soil had been buried there. Thus the source of possible nuisance was converted into invaluable manure for the Farm.

The work before us was to make the Farm a busy hive of industry, thus to save money and in the end to make the families self-supporting. We had to spend some money on shoes. We therefore determined to learn to make sandals. There is at Mariannhill a monastery where industries of this nature are carried on. Kallenbach went there and acquired the art of making sandals. After he returned, he taught it to me and I in my turn to other workers. Thus several young men learned how to manufacture sandals, and we commenced selling them. Another handicraft introduced was that of carpentry. Having founded a sort of village we needed all manner of things large and small from benches to boxes, and we made them all ourselves. Kallenbach was the head of the carpentry department.

Gokhale arrived in South Africa while we were still living on the Farm. There was no cot on the Farm, but we borrowed one for Gokhale. There was no room where he could enjoy full privacy. For sitting accommodation we had nothing beyond the benches in our school. When Gokhale came to know that all of us slept on the floor, he removed the cot which had been brought for him and had his own bed too spread on the floor. This whole night was a night of repentance for me. Gokhale would not permit anyone except a servant to wait upon him. He had no servant with him during this tour.

Kallenbach and I entreated him to let us massage his feet. But he would not let us even touch him, and half jocularly, half angrily said: "You all seem to think that you have been born to suffer hardships and discomforts, and people like myself have been born to be pampered by you. You must suffer today the punishment for this extremism of yours. I will not let you even touch me. Do you think that you will go out to attend to nature's needs and at the same time keep a commode for me? I will bear any amount of hardship but I will humble your pride." These words were to us like a thunderbolt, and deeply grieved Kallenbach and me. The only consolation was that Gokhale wore a smile on his face all the while. Gokhale bore everything cheerfully, but till the last never accepted the service which it was in our power to render.

The next morning he allowed no rest either to himself or to us. He corrected all his speeches which we proposed to publish in book form. When he had to write anything, he was in the habit of walking to and fro and thinking it out. He had to write a small letter and I thought that he would soon have done with it. But no. As I twitted him upon it, he read me a little homily: "You do not know my ways of life. I will not do even the least little thing in a hurry. I will think about it and consider the central idea. I will next deliberate as to the language suited to the subject and then set to write. If every one did as I do, the nation would be saved from the avalanche of half-baked ideas which now threatens to overwhelm her."

It was really a wonder how Kallenbach lived on Tolstoy Farm among our people as if he were one of us. Gokhale was not the man to be attracted by ordinary things. But even he felt strongly drawn to the revolutionary change in Kallenbach's life. Kallenbach had been brought up in the lap of luxury and had never known what privation was. He had had his fill of all the pleasures of life. It was no commonplace for such a man to live, move and have his being on Tolstoy Farm, and to become one with the Indian settlers. He mixed so lovingly with

the young as well as the old, that separation from him even for a short time left a void in their lives. Whenever a party of tourists left the Farm for Johannesburg at 2 a.m., Kallenbach would always be one of them.

At the commencement of the struggle *satyagrahis* were somewhat harassed by officials, and the jail authorities in some places were unduly severe. But as the movement advanced, we found that the bitterness of the officials was softened and in some cases they even began to assist us. Tolstoy Farm proved to be a center of spiritual purification and penance for the final campaign. I have serious doubts as to whether the struggle could have been prosecuted for eight years, whether we could have secured larger funds, and whether the thousands of men who participated in the last phase of the struggle would have borne their share in it, if there had been no Tolstoy Farm. Tolstoy Farm was never placed in the limelight, yet an institution which deserved it attracted public sympathy to itself. The Indians saw that the Tolstoy Farmers were doing what they themselves were not prepared to do and what they looked upon in the light of hardship. This public confidence was a great asset to the movement when it was organized afresh on a large scale in 1913.

GOKHALE'S TOUR

I had been requesting Gokhale and other leaders to go to South Africa and to study the condition of the Indian settlers on the spot. Gokhale was a student of the struggle in South Africa. He had initiated debates in the Legislative Council of India. I was in communication with him all along in England in 1911. He conferred with the Secretary of State for India and informed him of his intention to proceed to South Africa

and acquaint himself with the facts of the case at first hand. The minister approved of Gokhale's mission. Gokhale wrote to me asking me to arrange a program for a six weeks' tour and indicating the latest date when he must leave South Africa. We were simply overjoyed. No Indian leader had been to South Africa before, or for that matter to any other place outside India where Indians had emigrated, with a view to examine their condition. We therefore realized the importance of the visit of a great leader like Gokhale and determined to take him to the principal cities of South Africa. Indians cheerfully set about making grand preparations of welcome. Europeans were also invited to join and did generally join the reception. We also resolved that public meetings should be held in Town Halls wherever possible and the Mayor of the place should generally occupy the chair if he consented to do so. We undertook to decorate the principal stations on the railway line. The Union Government offered Gokhale their hospitality during his stay at Pretoria and placed the State railway saloon at his disposal.

Gokhale landed at Cape Town on October 22, 1912. His health was very much more delicate than I had expected. He could not endure much fatigue. The program I had framed was much too heavy for him, and I therefore cut it down as far as possible. I acted as his secretary throughout the tour. It was clear that we should have a great meeting in Cape Town. Gokhale made a speech, concise, full of sound judgment, firm but courteous, which pleased the Indians and fascinated the Europeans. In fact Gokhale won the hearts of the variegated people of South Africa on the very day that he set foot on South African soil.

I listened to every speech made by Gokhale, but I do not remember a single occasion when I could have wished that he had not expressed a certain idea or had omitted a certain adjective. The clearness, firmness and urbanity of Gokhale's

utterances flowed from his indefatigable labor and unswerving devotion to truth.

After Johannesburg, Gokhale proceeded to Pretoria, where he was to meet the ministers of the Government, including General Botha and General Smuts. Gokhale's interview with the ministers lasted for about two hours, and when he returned, he said, "You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the emigration law. The £3 tax will be abolished."

"I doubt it very much," I replied. "You do not know the ministers as I do. Being an optimist myself, I love your optimism; but having suffered frequent disappointments, I am not as hopeful in the matter as you are. But, I have no fears either. It is enough for me that you have obtained this undertaking from the ministers. It is my duty to fight it out only where it is necessary, and to demonstrate that ours is a righteous struggle. The promise given to you will serve as a proof of the justice of our demands and will redouble our fighting spirit if it comes to fighting after all. But I do not think I can return to India in a year and before many more Indians have gone to jail."

Thus having achieved a conquest of Indian as well as European hearts, Gokhale left South Africa on November 17, 1912. At his wish Kallenbach and I accompanied him as far as Zanzibar. On the steamer our talks were confined to India or to the duty we owed to the motherland. Every word of Gokhale glowed with his tender feeling, truthfulness and patriotism.

In these conversations Gokhale prepared me for India. He analyzed for me the characters of all the leaders in India and his analysis was so accurate that I have hardly perceived any difference between Gokhale's estimate and my own personal experience of them.

The parting at Zanzibar was deeply painful to Kallenbach

and me, but remembering that the most intimate relations of mortal men must come to an end at last, we somehow reconciled ourselves, and hoped that Gokhale's prophecy would come true and both of us would be able to go to India in a year's time.

Gokhale's tour led to his being recognized as a special authority on the South African question. His views on South Africa now carried greater weight. When the struggle was resumed, India rendered munificent help to the *satyagraha* funds and Lord Hardinge heartened the *satyagrahis* by expressing his "deep and burning" sympathy for them (December 1913). Messrs Andrews and Pearson came to South Africa from India. All this would have been impossible without Gokhale's mission.

Gokhale supposed that the £3 tax would be taken off in a year and the necessary legislation would be introduced in the ensuing session of the Union Parliament. Instead of this, General Smuts said that as the Europeans in Natal objected to the repeal of the tax, the Union Government were unable to pass legislation directing its removal.

I wrote to Gokhale about the breach of pledge, and he was deeply pained to hear of it. I asked him not to be anxious and assured him that we would fight unto death and wring a repeal of the tax out of the unwilling hands of the Transvaal Government. The idea, however, of my returning to India in a year had to be abandoned, and it was impossible to say when I would be able to go.

We set about making our preparations. It was realized that we would be imprisoned for long terms. It was decided to close Tolstoy Farm.

WOMEN IN JAIL

A fresh grievance came into being, which afforded an opportunity even to women to do their bit in the struggle. Some brave women had already offered to participate. But we did not then think it proper to send women to jail in a foreign land. But an event now happened, which involved a special affront to women, and which therefore left no doubt in our minds as to the propriety of sacrificing them.

Many married men came to South Africa from India, while some Indians contracted a marriage in South Africa itself. There is no law for the registration of ordinary marriages in India, and the religious ceremony suffices to confer validity upon them. Although Indians had settled in South Africa for the last forty years, the validity of marriages solemnized according to the rites of the various religions of India had never been called in question. But at this time there was a case in which the Cape Supreme Court gave judgment to the effect that all marriages were outside the pale of legal marriages in South Africa with the exception of such as were celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages. This terrible judgment thus nullified in South Africa at a stroke of the pen all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Musalman and Zoroastrian rites. The many married Indian women in South Africa in terms of this judgment ceased to rank as the wives of their husbands and were degraded to the rank of concubines, while their progeny were deprived of their right to inherit the parent's property. This was an insufferable situation for women no less than men, and the Indians in South Africa were deeply agitated.

According to my usual practice I wrote to the Government, asking them whether they agreed to the judgment and whether, they would amend the law so as to recognize the validity of Indian marriages consecrated according to the

religious customs of the parties and recognized as legal in India. The Government were not then in a mood to listen and could not see their way to comply with my request.

A crisis now arrived. Patience was impossible in the face of this insult offered to our womanhood. We decided to offer stubborn *satyagraha*. Not only could the women now be not prevented from joining the struggle, but we decided even to invite them to come into line along with the men. We first invited the sisters who had lived on Tolstoy Farm. I found that they were only too glad to enter the struggle. I gave them an idea of the risks incidental to such participation. I explained to them that they would have to put up with restraints in the matter of food, dress and personal movements. I warned them that they might be given hard work in jail and even subjected to insult by the warders. But these sisters feared none of these things. One of them was pregnant, while six of them had young babies in arms. But one and all were eager to join.

The first attempts of these sisters were not crowned with success. They entered the Transvaal without permits, but they were not arrested. They took to hawking without a license, but still the police ignored them. It now became a problem with the women how they should get arrested.

I had contemplated sacrificing all the settlers in Phoenix at a critical period. That was to be my final offering to the God of Truth. It was proposed that these friends should cross over into the Transvaal and get arrested for entering the country without permits. While the Phoenix group entered the Transvaal, the sisters who had courted arrest in the Transvaal in vain were to enter Natal. If the sisters were not arrested, they should proceed to Newcastle, the great coal-mining center in Natal, and advise the indentured Indian laborers there to go on strike.

I went to Phoenix, and talked to the settlers. I suggested that each should take his or her decision independently of all others. Again and again I pressed this condition on their attention that none should fall away whether the struggle was

short or long, and whether he or she kept good health or fell ill in jail. All were ready.

For entering the Transvaal without permits, the Phoenix party was arrested. They were sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labor. The sisters were not arrested. They therefore proceeded to Newcastle and set about their work. Their influence spread like wildfire. The pathetic story of the wrongs heaped up by the £3 tax touched the laborers to the quick, and they went on strike. I received the news and was as much perplexed as I was pleased. What was I to do? I was not prepared for this marvelous awakening. I had neither men nor the money which would enable me to cope with the work before me. But I visualized my duty very clearly. I must go to Newcastle and do what I could. Government could not now any longer leave the brave Transvaal sisters free to pursue their activities. They too were sentenced to imprisonment for three months.

These events stirred the heart of the Indians to its very depths not only in South Africa but also in the motherland. Pherozeshah [Mehta] had so far been indifferent. He held that nothing could be done for Indian emigrants beyond the seas so long as India had not achieved her own freedom, and he was little impressed with the *satyagraha* movement in its initial stages. But women in jail pleaded with him as nothing else could. As he himself put it in his Bombay Town Hall speech, his blood boiled at the thought of these women lying in jails herded with ordinary criminals, and India could not sleep over the matter any longer.

The women's bravery was beyond words. They were all kept in Maritzburg jail, where they were considerably harassed. Their food was of the worst quality and no food was permitted to be given them from outside nearly till the end of their term.

One sister returned from jail with a fatal fever to which she succumbed within a few days of her release. How can I forget her? Valliamma R. Munuswami Mudaliar was a girl only sixteen years of age. She was confined to bed when I saw her.

"Valliamma, you do not repent of your having gone to jail?" I asked.

"Repent? I am even now ready to go to jail again if I am arrested," said Valliamma.

"But what if it results in your death?" I pursued.

"I do not mind it. Who would not love to die for one's motherland?" was the reply.

Within a few days after this conversation Valliamma was no more with us in the flesh, but she left us the heritage of an immortal name. Condolence meetings were held at various places, and the Indians resolved to erect "Valliamma Hall", to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of this daughter of India. Unfortunately the resolution has not still been translated into action. But whether or not a hall is built in stone and mortar, Valliamma's service is imperishable. She built her temple of service with her own hands, and her glorious image has a niche even now reserved for it in many a heart. And the name of Valliamma will live in the history of South African *satyagraha* as long as India lives.

It was an absolutely pure sacrifice that was offered by these sisters, many of whom had no idea of country, their patriotism being based only upon faith. Some of them were illiterate and could not read the papers. But they knew that a mortal blow was being aimed at the Indians' honor, and their going to jail was a cry of agony and prayer offered from the bottom of their heart.

A STREAM OF LABORERS

The women's imprisonment worked like a charm upon the laborers on the mines near Newcastle who downed their tools and entered the city in succeeding batches. As soon as I received the news, I left Phoenix for Newcastle.

These laborers have no houses of their own. The mine-owners erect houses for them, set up lights upon their roads, and supply them with water, with the result that the laborers are reduced to a state of utter dependence. And as [the poet] Tulsidas put it, a dependent cannot hope for happiness even in a dream. The strikers brought quite a host of complaints to me. Some said the mine-owners had stopped their lights or their water, while others stated that they had thrown away the strikers' household chattels from their quarters. Saiyad Ibrahim, a Pathan, showed his back to me and said, "Look how severely they have thrashed me. I have let the rascals go for your sake, as such are your orders."

"Well done, brother," I replied. "I look upon such conduct alone as pure bravery. We will win through people of your type."

I thus congratulated him, but thought to myself that the strike could not continue if many received the same treatment as the Pathan did. I therefore suggested that the only possible course was for the laborers to leave their masters' quarters, to fare forth in fact like pilgrims.

The laborers were not to be counted by tens but by hundreds. And their number might easily swell into thousands. How was I to house and feed this ever growing multitude? Indian traders were mortally afraid and not at all ready to help me publicly, as they had trading relations with the coal[mine]-owners and other Europeans. Whenever I went to Newcastle, I used to stop with them. But this time, as I would place them in an awkward position, I resolved to put up at another place.

The Transvaal sisters were most of them Tamilians. They had taken up their quarters in Newcastle with D. Lazarus, Christian Tamilian, who owned a small plot of land and a house consisting of two or three rooms. I also decided to put up with this family, who received me with open arms. My stopping there converted his house into a caravanserai. All sorts and conditions of men would come and go and the

premises at all times would present the appearance of an ocean of heads. The kitchen fire would know no rest day and night. Mrs. Lazarus would drudge like a slave all day long, and yet her face as well as her husband's would always be lit up with a smile as with perpetual sunshine.

But Lazarus could not feed hundreds of laborers. I suggested to the laborers that they should take it that their strike was to last for all time and leave the quarters provided by their masters. They must sell such of their goods as could find a purchaser. The rest they must leave in their quarters. When they came to me, they should bring nothing with them except their wearing apparel and blankets. I promised to live and have my meals with them so long as the strike lasted and so long as they were outside jail. They could sustain their strike and win a victory if, and only if, they came out on these conditions. Those who could not summon courage enough to take this line of action should return to work. None should despise or harass those who thus resumed their work.

From the very day that I made this announcement, there was a continuous stream of pilgrims who "retired from the household life to the houseless one" along with their wives and children with bundles of clothes upon their heads. I had no means of housing them; the sky was the only roof over their heads. Luckily for us the weather was favorable, there being neither rain nor cold. The traders of Newcastle supplied cooking pots and bags of rice and *dal*. Other places also showered rice, *dal*, vegetables, condiments and other things upon us. Not all were ready to go to jail, but all felt for the cause and all were willing to bring their quota to the movement to the best of their ability. Those who could not give anything served as volunteer workers. Well-known and intelligent volunteers were required to look after these obscure and uneducated men, and they were forthcoming. They rendered priceless help, and many of them were also arrested. Thus every one did what he could, and smoothed our path.

There was a huge concourse of men, which was continuously receiving accessions. It was a dangerous if not an impossible task to keep them in one place and look after them while they had no employment. They were generally ignorant of the laws of sanitation. Some of them had been to jail for criminal offences such as murder, theft or adultery. But I did not consider myself fit to sit in judgment over the morality of the strikers. There were bound to be crimes if such a heterogeneous multitude was pinned down to one place without any work to do. The wonder was that the few days that we stopped here passed without any incident. All were quiet as if they had thoroughly grasped the gravity of the situation.

I thought out a solution of my problem. I must take this "army" to the Transvaal. The strength of the "army" was about five thousand. I had not the money to pay the railway fare for such a large number of persons and therefore they could not all be taken by rail. The Transvaal border is 36 miles from Newcastle. I finally decided to march on foot. I consulted the laborers who had their wives and children with them and some of whom therefore hesitated to agree to my proposal. I had no alternative except to harden my heart, and declared that those who wished were free to return to the mines. But none of them would avail themselves of this liberty. All able-bodied persons announced their readiness to go to Charlestown on foot. The march was to be accomplished in two days. The laborers realized that it would be some relief to poor Lazarus and his family.

The Europeans in Newcastle anticipated an outbreak of plague, and were anxious to take all manner of steps in order to prevent it. By making a move we restored to them their peace of mind and also saved ourselves from the irksome measures to which they would have subjected us.

THE CONFERENCE AND AFTER

While preparations for the march were on foot, I received an invitation to meet the mine-owners and I went to Durban. When I met them, I saw that the atmosphere was surcharged with the heat and passion of the moment. Instead of hearing me explain the situation, their representative proceeded to cross-examine me. I gave him suitable answers.

"You will not then advise the laborers to return to work?"

"I am sorry I can't."

"Do you know what will be the consequences?"

"I know, I have a full sense of my responsibility."

"Yes, indeed. You have nothing to lose. But will you compensate the misguided laborers for the damage you will cause them?"

"The laborers have gone on strike after due deliberation, and with a full consciousness of the losses which would accrue to them. I cannot conceive a greater loss to a man than the loss of his self-respect, and it is a matter of deep satisfaction to me that the laborers have realized this fundamental principle."

During my journey to Durban and back I saw that the strike and the peaceful behavior of the strikers had produced an excellent impression upon the railway guards and others. I traveled in third class as usual, but even there the guard and other officers would surround me, make diligent inquiries and wish me success. They would provide me with various minor facilities. These officers were astonished to find that poor, illiterate and ignorant laborers made such a splendid display of firmness. Firmness and courage are qualities which are bound to leave their impress even upon the adversary.

I returned to Newcastle. Laborers were still pouring in from all directions. I clearly explained the whole situation to the "army". I said they were still free to return to work if they

wished. I told them about the threats held out by the [mine]-owners, and pictured before them the risks of the future. I described to the men the hardships of jail, and yet they would not flinch. They fearlessly replied, that they would never be down-hearted so long as I was fighting by their side, and they asked me not to be anxious about them as they were inured to hardships.

It was now only left for us to march. The laborers were informed one evening that they were to commence the march early next morning (October 28, 1913), and the rules to be observed on the march were read to them. It was no joke to control a multitude of five or six thousand men. I could not afford to give anything on the road beyond a daily ration of one pound and a half of bread and an ounce of sugar to each 'soldier'. I planned to get something more from the Indian traders on the way. But if I failed they must rest content with bread and sugar. My experience of the Boer War and the Zulu 'rebellion' stood me in good stead on the present occasion. None of the 'invaders' was to keep with him any more clothes than necessary. They were to bear it patiently if any European abused or even flogged them. They were to allow themselves to be arrested if the police offered to arrest them. The march must continue even if I was arrested.

The men understood the instructions issued to them, and our caravan safely reached Charlestown, where the traders rendered us great help. They gave us the use of their houses, and permitted us to make our cooking arrangements on the grounds of the mosque.

Charlestown was a small village with a population of hardly 1,000 souls, and could never accommodate the several thousands of pilgrims. Only women and children were lodged in houses. All the rest camped in the open. The kitchen was active all the twenty-four hours, as hungry men would arrive at any time of the day or night. I was the leader among the cooks. Sometimes there was too much water in the *dal*, at

other times it was insufficiently cooked. The vegetable and even the rice was sometimes ill-cooked.

Serving the food was, if possible, even more difficult than cooking it, and was in my sole charge. Even so it rested with me to satisfy all present by cutting down the individual ration when there was more than the expected number of diners. I can never forget the angry look which the sisters gave me for a moment when I gave them too little food, and which was at once transformed into a smile as they understood the thanklessness of my self-chosen task. "I am helpless," I would say. "The quantity cooked is small, and as I have to feed many, I must divide it equally between them." Upon this they would grasp the situation and go away smiling, saying that they were content.

I found that when the men had a little leisure, they occupied it with internal squabbles. What was worse, there were cases of adultery. There was terrible overcrowding and men and women had to be kept together. Animal passion knows no shame. Even when someone did go wrong, there was no exhibition of insolence.

The "army of peace" was to march twenty to twenty-four miles a day for eight days with a view to reach Tolstoy Farm, and to stop there till the struggle was over and in the meanwhile to maintain themselves by working the Farm. Kallenbach had made all the necessary arrangements. The idea was to construct mud huts with the help of the pilgrims themselves.

When all the preparations for the march were completed, I made one more effort to achieve a settlement. From Charlestown I phoned to General Smuts in Pretoria. I called his secretary and said: "Tell General Smuts that I am fully prepared for the march. The Europeans in Volksrust are excited and perhaps likely to violate even the safety of our lives. They have certainly held out such a threat. I am sure that even the General would not wish any such untoward event to happen.

If he promises to abolish the £3 tax, I will stop the march. Will not the General accede to such a small request?"

I received this reply within half a minute: "General Smuts will have nothing to do with you. You may do just as you please."

THE GREAT MARCH

The caravan of pilgrims started punctually at the appointed hour. There is a small spruit [streamlet] one mile from Charlestown, and as soon as one crosses it, one has entered Volksrust or the Transvaal. The march into the Transvaal began.

Two days before this the Europeans of Volksrust held a meeting where they offered all manner of threats to the Indians. Some said that they would shoot the Indians if they entered the Transvaal. Kallenbach attended this meeting to reason with the Europeans who were however not prepared to listen to him. Indeed some of them even stood up to assault him. Kallenbach is an athlete, having received physical training at the hands of Sandow, and it was not easy to frighten him. One European challenged him to a duel.

Kallenbach replied, "As I have accepted the religion of peace, I may not accept the challenge. Let him who will come and do his worst with me. But I will continue to claim a hearing at this meeting. You have publicly invited all Europeans to attend, and I am here to inform you that not all Europeans are ready as you are to lay violent hands upon innocent men. There is one European who would like to inform you that the charges you level at the Indians are false. The Indians do not want what you imagine them to do. The Indians are not out to challenge your position as rulers. They do not wish to fight with you or to fill the country. They only seek justice pure and simple. They propose to enter the Transvaal not with a

view to settle there, but only as an effective demonstration against the unjust tax which is levied upon them. They are brave men. They will not injure you in person or in property, they will not fight with you; but enter the Transvaal they will, even in the face of your gunfire. They are not the men to beat a retreat from the fear of your bullets or your spears. They propose to melt, and I know they will melt, your hearts by self-suffering. This is all I have to say. I have had my say and I believe that I have thus rendered you a service. Beware and save yourselves from perpetrating a wrong."

With these words Kallenbach resumed his seat. The audience was rather abashed. The pugilist who had invited Kallenbach to single combat became his friend.

We had heard about this meeting and were prepared for any mischief by the Europeans in Volksrust. Our procession passed through the place in peace. I do not remember that any European attempted even a jest. All were out to witness this novel sight, while there was even a friendly twinkle in the eyes of some of them.

On the first day, we were to stop for the night at Palmford, about eight miles from Volksrust, and we reached the place at about 5 p.m. The pilgrims took their ration of bread and sugar, and spread themselves in the open air. Some were talking while others were singing *bhajans*. Some of the women were thoroughly exhausted by the march. They had dared to carry their children in their arms, but it was impossible for them to proceed further. I, therefore, kept them as lodgers with a good Indian shopkeeper who promised to send them to Tolstoy Farm if we were permitted to go there, and to their homes if we were arrested.

As the night advanced, all noises ceased and I too was preparing to retire when I heard a tread. I saw a European coming lantern in hand. I understood what it meant, but had no preparations to make. The police officer said, "I have a warrant of arrest for you. I want to arrest you."

"When?" I asked.

"Immediately."

"Where will you take me?"

"To the adjoining railway station now, and to Volksrust when we get a train for it."

"I will go with you without informing anyone, but I will leave some instructions with one of my co-workers."

"You may do so."

I roused P. K. Naidoo who was sleeping near me. I informed him about my arrest and asked him not to awaken the pilgrims before morning. At daybreak they must regularly resume the march. When it was time for them to halt and get their rations, he must break to them the news of my arrest. If the pilgrims were arrested, they must allow themselves to be arrested. Otherwise they must continue the march according to the program. I also told him what was to be done in case he was arrested.

I went with the police officer, and we took the train for Volksrust the next morning. I appeared before the Court in Volksrust, but the Public Prosecutor himself asked for a remand until the 14th as he was not ready with the evidence. The case was postponed accordingly. I applied for bail as I had over 2,000 men, 122 women and 50 children in my charge whom I should like to take on to their destination within the period of postponement. The Magistrate released me on bail of £50. Kallenbach had a car ready for me, and he took me at once to rejoin the 'invaders'. We continued the march. At Standerton, I was distributing bread to the pilgrims [when] the Magistrate came and stood by my side. He waited till the distribution of rations was over, and then said, "You are my prisoner."

I asked the pilgrims to continue their march, and then left with the Magistrate. I was at once brought before the Court and applied for remand and bail on the same grounds as in Volksrust. Here too I was released and the case was remanded. The Indian traders had kept a carriage ready for me and I

rejoined the pilgrims again when they had hardly proceeded three miles further.

ALL IN PRISON

We were now near Johannesburg. Thus far we had accomplished our marches exactly according to program and we now had four days' march in front of us.

Government saw that my arrest did not dishearten or frighten the pilgrims, nor did it lead them to break the peace. If they took to rioting, Government would have an excellent opportunity of converting them into food for gunpowder. Our firmness was very distressing to General Smuts, coupled as it was with peacefulness, and he even said as much. How long can you harass a peaceful man? How can you kill the voluntarily dead? Our victory was implicit in our combination of the two qualities of non-violence and determination.

Gokhale desired by cable that Polak should go to India and help him in placing the facts of the situation before the Indian and Imperial Governments. But he would not leave without meeting me. He therefore joined us at Teakworth. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Polak and I were walking at the head of the whole body of pilgrims. While we were engaged in talking, a cart came and stopped before us and from it alighted the Principal Immigration Officer of the Transvaal and a police officer. One of them said, "I arrest you."

I was thus arrested thrice in four days. I asked Polak to assume charge and go with the pilgrims. The pilgrims resumed their march and reached Balfour where three special trains were drawn up at the station to take them and deport them to Natal.

I, on my part, was again hauled up before the Magistrate. This time I was arrested on the principal charge of inducing indentured laborers to leave the province of Natal. I was

sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labor. I had still to take my second trial at Volksrust on the charge of aiding and abetting prohibited persons to enter the Transvaal. I was therefore taken to Volksrust where I was glad to meet Kallenbach and Polak in the jail.

The Magistrate passed sentences of three months' imprisonment on all three of us. We passed a few happy days in Volksrust jail, where new prisoners came every day. Among these *satyagrahi* prisoners there was one named Harbatsinh who was about 75 years of age.

"Why are you in jail?" I asked Harbatsinh. "I have not invited old men like yourself to court jail."

"How could I help it," replied Harbatsinh, "when you, your wife and even your boys went to jail for our sake?"

"But you will not be able to endure the hardships of jail life. I would advise you to leave jail. Shall I arrange for your release?"

"No, please. I will never leave jail. I must die one of these days, and how happy should I be to die in jail!"

It was not for me to try to shake such determination. My head bent in reverence before this illiterate sage. Harbatsinh had his wish and he died in Durban jail on January 5, 1914. His body was with great honor cremated in the presence of hundreds of Indians. There were many like Harbatsinh in the *satyagraha* struggle. But the great good fortune of dying in jail was reserved for him alone.

THE TEST

The jeweler rubs gold on the touchstone. If he is not still satisfied as to its purity, he puts it into the fire and hammers it so that the dross if any is removed and only pure gold

remains. The Indians in South Africa passed through a similar test. They were hammered, and passed through fire and had the hall-mark attached to them only when they emerged unscathed.

The pilgrims were taken on special trains for baptism through fire. On the way the Government did not care to arrange even to feed them and when they reached Natal, they were prosecuted and sent to jail straightaway. But the Government would have to incur additional expenditure if they kept thousands of laborers in prison. And the coal mines would close down in the interval. If such a state of things lasted for any length of time, the Government would be compelled to repeal the £3 tax. They therefore struck out a new plan. Surrounding them with wire netting, the Government proclaimed the mine compounds as outstations to the jails and appointed the mine owners' European staffs as the warders. In this way they forced the laborers underground against their will and the mines began to work once more. There is this difference between the status of a servant and that of a slave, that if a servant leaves his post, only a civil suit can be filed against him, whereas the slave who leaves his master can be brought back to work by force. The laborers therefore were now reduced to slavery pure and simple.

But the laborers were brave men, and they flatly declined to work on the mines with the result that they were brutally whipped. The insolent men dressed in a brief authority over them kicked and abused them and heaped upon them other wrongs which have never been placed on record. But the poor laborers patiently put up with all their tribulations. Cablegrams regarding these outrages were sent to India addressed to Gokhale who would inquire in his turn if he did not even for a day receive a fully detailed message. Gokhale broadcast the news from his sickbed, as he was seriously ill at the time. In spite of his illness, however, he insisted upon attending to the South African business himself and was at it at night no less

than by day. Eventually all India was deeply stirred, and the South African question became the burning topic of the day.

It was then (December 1913) that Lord Hardinge made his famous speech in Madras which created a stir in South Africa as well as in England. The Viceroy may not publicly criticize other members of the Empire, but Lord Hardinge not only passed severe criticism upon the Union Government, but he also wholeheartedly defended the action of the *satyagrahis* and supported their civil disobedience of unjust legislation. The conduct of Lord Hardinge came in for some adverse comment in England, but even then he asserted the perfect propriety of the step he had been driven to adopt.

Let us leave for the moment these brave but unhappy laborers confined to their mines, and consider the situation in other parts of Natal. The mines were situated in the northwest of Natal, but the largest number of Indian laborers was to be found employed on the coasts. The news of the strike and the arrest spread everywhere at lightning speed, and thousands of laborers unexpectedly and spontaneously came out. Some of them sold their household chattels from an impression that it would be a long drawn out struggle and they could not expect to be fed by others. When I went to jail, I had warned my co-workers against allowing any more laborers to go on strike. I hoped that a victory could be achieved with the help of the miners. If all the laborers, there were about sixty thousand of them all told, were called out it would be difficult to maintain them. We had not the means of taking so many on the march; we had neither the men to control them nor the money to feed them. Moreover, with such a large body of men it would be impossible to prevent a breach of the peace.

But when the floodgates are opened, there is no checking the universal deluge. The laborers everywhere struck work of their own accord, and volunteers also posted themselves in the various places to look after them.

Government now adopted a policy of blood and iron.

They prevented the laborers from striking by sheer force. Mounted military policemen chased the strikers and brought them back to their work. The slightest disturbance on the part of the laborers was answered by rifle fire. A body of strikers resisted the attempt to take them back to work. Fire was opened upon them, wounding many and killing some. But the laborers refused to be cowed down.

This firing and the treatment accorded by the Government to the strikers were quite illegal. The very act of striking work was treated as an offence not in virtue of any law but of the authority of the Government. The pain of the Indians in South Africa made itself heard everywhere. I observed in this struggle, that its end drew nearer as the distress of the fighters became more intense, and as the innocence of the distressed grew clearer. The Indians of South Africa successfully passed the test to which they were subjected. They entered the fire and emerged out of it unscathed.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The Indians exerted as much quiet strength as they could and more than could be expected of them. The very large majority of these passive resisters were poor downtrodden men of whom no hope could possibly be entertained. All the responsible workers of the Phoenix settlement with the exception of two or three were now in jail. Phoenix now became the center of the strikers and was visited by hundreds of them who came there to seek advice as well as shelter. It therefore naturally attracted the attention of the Government, and the angry looks of the Europeans thereabouts. It became somewhat risky to live in Phoenix, and yet even children there accomplished dangerous tasks with courage. West was arrested in the meanwhile. As soon as the news of the arrest of West was

cabled to Gokhale, he initiated the policy of sending out able men from India. When a meeting was held in Lahore in support of the *satyagrahis* of South Africa, C. F. Andrews gave away in their interest all the money in his possession, and ever since then Gokhale had had his eye upon him. No sooner, therefore, did he hear about West's arrest, than he inquired of Andrews by wire if he was ready to proceed to South Africa at once. Andrews replied in the affirmative. His beloved friend Pearson also got ready to go the same moment, and the two friends left India for South Africa by the first available steamer.

But the struggle was now about to close. The Union Government had not the power to keep thousands of innocent men in jail. General Smuts saw that there had been injustice which called for remedy, but he was in the same predicament as a snake which has taken a rat in its mouth but can neither gulp it down nor cast it out. States amenable to public opinion get out of such awkward positions by appointing a commission. General Smuts appointed a commission of three members, with which the Indians pledged themselves to have nothing to do so long as certain demands of theirs were not granted by the Government. One of these demands was, that the *satyagrahi* prisoners should be released, and another that the Indians should be represented on the commission by at least one member. The commission itself recommended to the Government, "with a view to enabling the enquiry to be made as thorough as possible", that Kallenbach, Polak and I should be released unconditionally. The Government released us after an imprisonment of hardly six weeks.

All these events transpired before the arrival of Andrews and Pearson whom I was thus able to welcome as they landed at Durban. This was my first meeting with these noble Englishmen.

The news of the commission came to us as a surprise, but we saw that we could not cooperate with the commission in any shape or form. We felt that the Indians should be

certainly allowed to nominate at least one representative on the commission. General Smuts declined to appoint any more members on the commission. Upon receiving this reply we had no alternative but to prepare to go to jail. We therefore published a notification to the Indians that a party of Indians courting jail would commence their march from Durban on January 1, 1914.

But I wrote privately to the General, requesting to see him and place some facts before him if the Government were out to do justice. General Smuts granted my request for an interview, and the march was postponed for a few days accordingly.

Just at this time, there was a great strike of the European employees of the Union railways, which made the position of the Government extremely delicate. I was called upon to commence the Indian march at such a fortunate juncture. But I declared that the Indians could not thus assist the railway strikers, as they were not out to harass the Government, their struggle being entirely different. Even if we undertook the march, we would begin it at some other time when the railway trouble had ended. This decision of ours created a deep impression, and was cabled to England by Reuter. Lord Ampthill cabled his congratulations from England. English friends in South Africa too appreciated our decision. One of the secretaries of General Smuts jocularly said: "I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness." General Smuts also gave expression to similar sentiments.

This was not the first incident of chivalrous consideration for others being shown by the *satyagrahis*. When the Indian

laborers on the coast went on strike, the planters at Mount Edgecombe would have been put to great losses if all the cane that had been cut was not brought to the mill and crushed. Twelve hundred Indians therefore returned to work solely with a view to finish this part of the work, and joined their compatriots only when it was finished. Again when the Indian employees of the Durban Municipality struck work, those who were engaged in the sanitary services of the borough or as attendants upon the patients in hospitals willingly returned to their duties. If the sanitary services were dislocated, and if there was no one to attend upon the patients in hospitals, there might be an outbreak of disease in the city and no *satyagrahi* would wish for such consequences to ensue. Employees of this description were therefore exempted from the strike. In every step that he takes, the *satyagrahi* is bound to consider the position of his adversary.

I could see that the numerous cases of such chivalry left their invisible yet potent impress everywhere, enhanced the prestige of the Indians, and prepared a suitable atmosphere for a settlement.

THE PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

Correspondence passed between General Smuts and myself, placing on record the agreement arrived at as the result of a number of interviews. We thus reached a provisional agreement, and *satyagraha* was suspended for the last time. Many English friends were glad of this, and promised their assistance in the final settlement. It was rather difficult to get the Indians to endorse this agreement. No one would wish that the enthusiasm which had arisen should be allowed to subside. Again, whoever would trust General Smuts? Some reminded me of the fiasco in 1908, and said, "General Smuts once played

us false and subjected the community to endless suffering. This man will betray you once again, and you will again propose to revive *satyagraha*. But who will then listen to you? With a man like General Smuts settlement is possible only if he actually delivers the goods. It is no use having his assurances."

No matter how often a *satyagrahi* is betrayed, he will repose his trust in the adversary. Meetings were therefore held in various places, and I was able at last to persuade the Indians to approve of the terms of the agreement.

Meanwhile the commission set to work and its report was published at once. The commission recommended compliance without delay with the demands of the Indian community, such as the repeal of the £3 tax and the validation of Indian marriages, and the grant of some trifling concessions in addition.

Thus the great *satyagraha* struggle closed after eight years, and it appeared that the Indians in South Africa were now at peace. On July 18, 1914, Kasturbai, Kallenbach and I sailed for England to meet Gokhale on my way back to India with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret. Pleasure, because I was returning home after many years and eagerly looked forward to serving the country under Gokhale's guidance. Regret, because it was a great wrench for me to leave South Africa, where I had passed twenty-one years of my life sharing to the full in the sweets and bitters of human experience, and where I had realized my vocation in life.

When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the *satyagraha* struggle and the present condition of the Indians in South Africa, one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing, or is inclined to question the efficacy of *satyagraha* as a solvent of the problems of mankind. Let us here consider this point for a little while. There is a law of nature that a thing can be retained by the same means by which it has been acquired. A thing acquired by violence can be retained by violence alone, while one acquired by truth can be retained only by truth. There are no such miraculous

properties in *satyagraha*, that a thing acquired by truth could be retained even when truth was given up.

Finally, had it not been for this great struggle and for the untold sufferings which many Indians invited upon their devoted heads, the Indians today would have been hounded out of South Africa. Nay, the victory achieved by Indians in South Africa more or less served as a shield for Indian emigrants in other parts of the British Empire. I will consider myself amply repaid if I have in these pages demonstrated with some success that *satyagraha* is a priceless and matchless weapon, and that those who wield it are strangers to disappointment or defeat.

As we entered the English Channel, we received the news of the war's outbreak. War was declared on the 4th of August. We reached London on the 6th. Kallenbach had accompanied me to England with a view to going to India. When I returned to India, he was not permitted to go with me on account of the war. He was, like all other Germans, interned in England. It was a great wrench for me to part from Kallenbach, but I could see that his pang was greater.

When the war was over, Kallenbach returned to Johannesburg and recommenced the practice of his profession.

A few days more and we reached Bombay. It was such a joy to get back to the homeland after an exile of ten years. Gokhale had inspired a reception for me in Bombay, where he had come in spite of his delicate health. I had approached India in the ardent hope of merging myself in him, and thereby feeling free. But fate had willed it otherwise.

REMINISCENCES OF THE BAR

Some lawyer friends have asked me to give my reminiscences of the bar. The number of these is large. But it may not perhaps

be improper to recall some of those which bear upon the practice of truth.

I never resorted to untruth in my profession, and a large part of my legal practice was in the interest of public work, for which I charged nothing beyond out-of-pocket expenses, and these too I sometimes met myself. As a student I had heard that the lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. But this did not influence me, as I had no intention of earning either position or money by lying. My principle was put to the test many a time in South Africa. Often I knew that my opponents had tutored their witnesses, and if I only encouraged my client or his witnesses to lie, we could win the case. But I always resisted the temptation. In my heart of hearts I always wished that I should win only if my client's case was right. In fixing my fees I do not recall ever having made them conditional on my winning the case. Whether my client won or lost, I expected nothing more nor less than my fees. I warned every new client at the outset that he should not expect me to take up a false case or to coach the witnesses, with the result that I built up such a reputation that no false cases used to come to me. Indeed some of my clients would keep their clean cases for me, and take the doubtful ones elsewhere.

On one occasion, whilst I was conducting a case before a magistrate in Johannesburg, I discovered that my client had deceived me. I saw him completely break down in the witness box. So without any argument I asked the magistrate to dismiss the case. The opposing counsel was astonished, and the magistrate was pleased. I rebuked my client for bringing a false case to me. He knew that I never accepted false cases and he admitted his mistake. I also saw that my devotion to truth enhanced my reputation amongst the members of the profession and, in spite of the handicap of color, I was able in some cases to win even their affection. During my professional work it was also my habit never to conceal my ignorance from my clients or my colleagues. Wherever I felt myself at sea, I would

advise my client to consult some other counsel. This frankness earned me the unbounded affection and trust of my clients. This served me in good stead in my public work.

My object in practicing in South Africa was service of the community. The large-hearted Indians magnified into service [my] professional work done for money. When I advised them to suffer the hardships of imprisonment for the sake of their rights, many of them cheerfully accepted the advice, not so much because they had reasoned out the correctness of the course, as because of their confidence in, and affection for, me. As I write this, many a sweet reminiscence comes to my mind. Hundreds of clients became friends and real co-workers in public service, and their association sweetened a life that was otherwise full of difficulties and dangers.

Rustomji was one who became at once my client and co-worker. This friend once got into a very bad scrape. Though he kept me informed of most of his affairs, he had studiously kept back one thing. He was a large importer of goods from Bombay and Calcutta, and not infrequently he resorted to smuggling. But as he was on the best terms with customs officials, no one was inclined to suspect him. In charging duty, they used to take his invoices on trust. Some might even have connived at the smuggling. But to use the telling simile of the Gujarati poet Akho, theft like quicksilver won't be suppressed, and Rustomji's proved no exception. The good friend ran post haste to me, the tears rolling down his cheeks as he said: "Bhai[brother], I have deceived you. My guilt has been discovered today. I have smuggled and I am doomed. I must go to jail and be ruined. You alone may be able to save me from this predicament. I have kept back nothing else from you, but I never told you about this smuggling. But now, how I repent it!"

I calmed him and said: "To save or not to save you is in His hands. As to me, you know my way. I can but try to save you by means of confession."

The good Parsi felt deeply mortified. "But is not my confession before you enough?" he asked.

"You have wronged not me but Government. How will the confession made before me avail you?" I replied gently.

"Of course I will do just as you advise."

I said to him: "It rests with the Customs Officer to prosecute you or to let you go, and he in turn will have to be guided by the Attorney General. I am prepared to meet both. I propose that you should offer to pay the penalty they fix, and the odds are that they will be agreeable. But if they are not, you must be prepared to go to jail. I am of opinion that the shame lies not so much in going to jail as in committing the offence. The deed of shame has already been done. Imprisonment you should regard as a penance. The real penance lies in resolving never to smuggle again."

I cannot say that Rustomji took all this quite well. He was a brave man, but his courage failed him for the moment. His name and fame were at stake, and where would he be if the edifice he had reared with such care and labor should go to pieces? "Well, I have told you," he said, "that I am entirely in your hands. You may do just as you like."

I brought to bear on this case all my powers of persuasion. I met the Customs Officer and fearlessly apprised him of the whole affair. I also promised to place all the books at his disposal and told him how penitent Rustomji was feeling.

The Customs Officer said: "I like the old Parsi. I am sorry he has made a fool of himself. You know where my duty lies. I must be guided by the Attorney General and so I would advise you to use all your persuasion with him."

I entered into correspondence with the Attorney General and also met him. I am glad to say that he appreciated my complete frankness and was convinced that I had kept back nothing. The case against Rustomji was compromised. He was to pay a penalty equal to twice the amount he had confessed to having smuggled. Rustomji reduced to writing the facts of

the whole case, got the paper framed and hung it up in his office to serve as a perpetual reminder to his heirs and fellow merchants.

WITH GOKHALE AGAIN

Before I reached home, the party which had started from Phoenix had already arrived. I wanted them all to stay together in India, if possible, and to live the life they had led at Phoenix. I did not know of any *ashram* to which I could recommend them to go, and therefore cabled to them to meet Andrews and do as he advised. So they were first put in the Gurukul, Kangri, where Swami Shraddhanand treated them as his own children. After this they were put in the *Shantiniketan Ashram*, where the Poet [Tagore] and his people showered similar love upon them. It was only when I landed in Bombay that I learned that the Phoenix party was at Shantiniketan. I was therefore impatient to meet them as soon as I could after my meeting with Gokhale.

The receptions in Bombay gave me an occasion for offering what might be called a little *satyagraha*. The Gujaratis would not let me go without a reception. I had acquainted myself with the program beforehand. Mr. Jinnah was present, being a Gujarati, as the principal speaker. He made a short and sweet little speech in English. As far as I remember, most of the other speeches were also in English. When my turn came, I expressed my thanks in Gujarati explaining my partiality for Gujarati and Hindustani, and entering my humble protest against the use of English in a Gujarati gathering. This I did, not without some hesitation, for I was afraid lest it should be considered discourteous for an inexperienced man, returned home after a long exile, to enter his protest against established practices. But no one seemed to

misunderstand my insistence on replying in Gujarati. Everyone seemed reconciled to my protest.

The moment I reached Bombay, Gokhale sent me word that the Governor was desirous of seeing me, and that it might be proper for me to respond before I left for Poona. Accordingly I called on His Excellency. After the usual inquiries, he said: "I ask one thing of you. I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning Government."

I replied: "I can very easily give the promise, inasmuch as it is my rule, as a *satyagrahi*, to understand the viewpoint of the party I propose to deal with, and to try to agree with him as far as may be possible. I strictly observed the rule in South Africa and I mean to do the same here."

Lord Willingdon thanked me and said: "You may come to me whenever you like, and you will see that my Government do not willfully do anything wrong."

To which I replied: "It is that faith which sustains me."

After a brief stay in Bombay I went to Poona whither Gokhale had summoned me.

I informed Gokhale of my intentions. I wanted to have an *ashram* [commune] where I could settle down with my Phoenix family, preferably somewhere in Gujarat, as, being a Gujarati, I thought I was best fitted to serve the country through serving Gujarat. Gokhale liked the idea. He said: "You should certainly do so. You must look to me for the expenses of the *ashram*, which I will regard as my own." My heart overflowed with joy. It was a pleasure to feel free from the responsibility of raising funds, and to realize that I should be able to count on a sure guide whenever I was in difficulty.

ADVENT OF SATYAGRAHA IN INDIA

From Poona I went to Rajkot and Porbandar, where I had to meet my relatives. On account of the plague prevailing at that time, the third class [railway] passengers were being medically inspected at Viramgam or Wadhwan – I forget which. The inspector, on finding that I had a temperature, asked me to report myself to the Medical Officer at Rajkot and noted down my name.

The tailor Motilal, a noted public worker, met me at the station. He told me about the Viramgam customs, and the hardships railway passengers had to suffer on account of it. I had little inclination to talk because of my fever, and tried to finish with a brief reply which took the form of a question: "Are you prepared to go to jail?"

I had taken Motilal to be one of those impetuous youths who do not think before speaking. But not so Motilal. He replied with firm deliberation: "We will certainly go to jail, provided you lead us. As Kathiawadis, we have the first right on you. Of course we do not mean to detain you now, but you must promise to halt here on your return. You will be delighted to see the work and the spirit of our youths, and you may trust us to respond as soon as you summon us." Motilal captivated me. His comrade, eulogizing him, said: "Our friend is but a tailor. But he is such a master of his profession that he easily earns Rs. 15 a month, which is just what he needs, working an hour a day, and gives the rest of his time to public work. He leads us all, putting our education to shame."

Later I came in close contact with Motilal, and I saw that there was no exaggeration in the eulogy. He made a point of spending some days in the then newly started *ashram* every month to teach the children tailoring and to do some of the tailoring of the *ashram* himself. He would talk to me every day

of the hardships of the passengers, which had become absolutely unbearable for him.

My experience is that the officials, instead of looking upon third class passengers as fellowmen, regard them as so many sheep. They talk to them contemptuously, brook no reply or argument. All this I have seen with my own eyes. No reform is possible unless some of the educated and the rich voluntarily accept the status of the poor, travel third, refuse to enjoy the amenities denied to the poor and, instead of taking avoidable hardships, discourtesies and injustice as a matter of course, fight for their removal.

Wherever I went in Kathiawad, I heard complaints about the Viramgam customs hardships. I therefore decided immediately to make use of Lord Willingdon's offer. I collected and read all the literature available on the subject, convinced myself that the complaints were well founded, and opened correspondence with the Bombay Government. I called on the Private Secretary to Lord Willingdon and waited on His Excellency also. The latter expressed his sympathy but shifted the blame on Delhi. "If it had been in our hands, we should have removed the cordon long ago. You should approach the Government of India," said the secretary.

I communicated with the Government of India, but got no reply beyond an acknowledgment. It was only when I had an occasion to meet Lord Chelmsford [the Viceroy] later that redress could be had. When I placed the facts before him, he expressed his astonishment. He had known nothing of the matter. He gave me a patient hearing, telephoned that very moment for papers about Viramgam, and promised to remove the cordon if the authorities had no explanation or defense to offer. Within a few days of this interview the Viramgam customs cordon had been removed. I regarded this event as the advent of *satyagraha* in India.

SHANTINIKETAN

From Rajkot I proceeded to Shantiniketan. The teachers and students overwhelmed me with affection. The reception was a beautiful combination of simplicity, art and love.

The Phoenix family had been assigned separate quarters at Shantiniketan. Maganlal Gandhi was at their head, and he had made it his business to see that all the rules of the Phoenix *Ashram* should be scrupulously observed. I saw that, by dint of his love, knowledge and perseverance he had made his fragrance felt in the whole of Shantiniketan.

I quickly mixed with the teachers and students, and engaged them in a discussion on self-help. I put it to the teachers that, if they and the boys dispensed with the services of paid cooks and cooked their food themselves, it would enable the teachers to control the kitchen from the point of view of the boys' physical and moral health, and it would afford to the students an object-lesson in self-help. The boys welcomed it, if only because of their instinctive taste for novelty. So we launched the experiment. When I invited the Poet to express his opinion, he said that he did not mind it provided the teachers were favorable. To the boys he said, "The experiment contains the key to Swaraj."

Andrews was there, and also Pearson. Pearson began to wear away his body in making the experiment a success. He threw himself into it with zest. A batch was formed to cut vegetables, another to clean the grain, and so on. Others undertook to see to the sanitary cleaning of the kitchen and its surroundings. It was a delight to me to see them working spade in hand. But it was too much to expect the hundred and twenty-five boys with their teachers to take to this work of physical labor like ducks to water. There used to be daily discussions. Some began early to show fatigue. But Pearson was not the man to be tired. One would always find him with his

smiling face doing something or the other in or about the kitchen. He had taken upon himself the cleaning of the bigger utensils. A party of students played on their sitar before this cleaning party in order to beguile the tedium of the operation. All alike took the thing up with zest and Shantiniketan became a busy hive.

I had intended to stay at Shantiniketan for some time, but I had hardly been there a week when I received from Poona a telegram announcing Gokhale's death. The same day I left for Poona. Andrews accompanied me up to Burdwan. "Do you think," he asked me, "that a time will come for *satyagraha* in India? And if so, have you any idea when it will come?"

"It is difficult to say," said I. "For one year I am to do nothing. For Gokhale took from me a promise that I should travel in India for gaining experience, and express no opinion on public questions until I have finished the period of probation. Even after the year is over, I will be in no hurry to speak and pronounce opinions."

THE ASHRAM

When I happened to pass through Ahmedabad, many friends pressed me to settle down there, and they volunteered to find the expenses of the *ashram*, as well as a house for us to live in. I had a predilection for Ahmedabad. Being a Gujarati, I thought I should be able to render the greatest service to the country through the Gujarati language. And then, as Ahmedabad was an ancient center of handloom weaving, it was likely to be the most favorable field for the revival of the cottage industry of hand-spinning. There was also the hope that, monetary help from its wealthy citizens would be more available here than elsewhere. The question of untouchability was

naturally among the subjects discussed with the Ahmedabad friends. I made it clear to them that I should take the first opportunity of admitting an untouchable candidate to the *ashram* if he was otherwise worthy.

I finally decided to found the *ashram* at Ahmedabad. So far as accommodation was concerned, Jivanlal Desai, a barrister in Ahmedabad, was the principal man to help me. He offered to let, and we decided to hire, his Kochrab bungalow. The first thing we had to settle was the name of the *ashram*. Amongst the names suggested were '*Sevashram*' (the abode of service), '*Tapovan*' (the abode of austerities), etc. I wanted to acquaint India with the method I had tried in South Africa, and I desired to test in India the extent to which its application might be possible. So my companions and I selected the name '*Satyagraha Ashram*'. We were in all about twenty-five men and women. All had their meals in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family.

The *Ashram* had been in existence only a few months when we were put to a test such as I had scarcely expected. I received a letter from Amritlal Thakkar: "A humble and honest untouchable family is desirous of joining your *Ashram*. Will you accept them?" I was perturbed. I shared the letter with my companions. They welcomed it. I wrote to Thakkar expressing our willingness to accept the family.

The family consisted of Dudabhai, his wife Danibehn and their daughter Lakshmi, then a mere toddling babe. Dudabhai had been a teacher in Bombay. They all agreed to abide by the rules and were accepted. But their admission created a flutter amongst the friends who had been helping the *Ashram*. The very first difficulty was found with regard to the use of the well, which was partly controlled by the owner of the bungalows. The man in charge of the water-lift objected that drops of water from our bucket would pollute him. So he took to swearing at us and molesting Dudabhai. I told everyone to put up with the abuse and continue drawing water at any cost.

When he saw that we did not return his abuse, the man became ashamed and ceased to bother us.

All monetary help, however, stopped. With the stopping of monetary help came rumors of proposed social boycott. We were prepared for all this. I had told my companions that if we were boycotted and denied the usual facilities, we would not leave Ahmedabad. We would rather go and stay in the untouchables' quarter and live on whatever we could get by manual labor. Matters came to such a pass that one day Maganlal gave me this notice: "We are out of funds and there is nothing for the next month." I quietly replied: "Then we shall go to the untouchables' quarter."

This was not the first time I had been faced with such a trial. On all such occasions, God has sent help at the last moment. One morning, shortly after Maganlal had given me warning of our monetary plight, one of the children came and said that a Sheth who was waiting in a car outside wanted to see me. I went out to him. "I want to give the *Ashram* some help. Will you accept it?" he asked.

"Most certainly," said I. "And I confess I am at the present moment at the end of my resources."

"I shall come tomorrow at this time," he said.

Next day, the car drew up near our quarters. I went out to see him. He placed in my hands currency notes of the value of Rs. 13,000, and drove away. I had never expected this help. The gentleman had never before visited the *Ashram*. So far as I can remember, I had met him only once. No visit, no enquiries, simply rendering help and going away! This was a unique experience for me. The help deferred the exodus to the untouchables' quarter. We now felt quite safe for a year.

Just as there was a storm outside, so was there a storm in the *Ashram* itself. Though in South Africa, untouchable friends used to come to my place and live and feed with me, my wife and other women did not seem quite to relish the admission into the *Ashram* of the untouchable friends. My eyes

and ears easily detected their indifference, if not their dislike, towards Danibehn. The monetary difficulty had caused me no anxiety, but this internal storm was more than I could bear. Danibehn was an ordinary woman. Dudabhai was a man with slight education but of good understanding. I pleaded with him to swallow minor insults. He not only agreed, but prevailed upon his wife to do likewise.

At that time the *Ashram* was in Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad. Plague broke out in this village, and I saw evident danger to the safety of the *ashram* children. It was impossible to keep ourselves immune from the effects of the surrounding insanitation, however scrupulously we might observe the rules of cleanliness within the *Ashram* walls. The plague, I felt, was sufficient notice to quit Kochrab. Punjabhai Hirachand, a merchant in Ahmedabad, used to serve us in a selfless spirit. He volunteered to procure us suitable land. He hit upon the present site. Its vicinity to the Sabarmati Central Jail was for me a special attraction. As jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of *satyagrahis*, I liked this position.

In about eight days the sale was executed. There was no building on the land and no tree. But its situation on the bank of the river and its solitude were great advantages. We decided to start by living under canvas, and having a tin shed for a kitchen, till permanent houses were built. The *Ashram* had been slowly growing. We were now over forty men, women and children. The ground was infested with snakes, and it was no small risk to live with little children under such conditions. The general rule was not to kill the snakes. The rule of not killing venomous reptiles had been practiced for the most part at Phoenix, Tolstoy Farm and Sabarmati. At each of these places we had to settle on wastelands. We have had, however, no loss of life occasioned by snakebite.

The principal activity of the *Ashram* was then weaving. Spinning had not so far been possible for us.

I am sorry that I should have to skip over quite a number

of things which are quite relevant because most of the characters in the drama are still alive, and it is not proper without permission to use their names in connection with events with which they are concerned. I therefore fear that the rest of the story, valuable as it is in my opinion to seekers after Truth, will be told with inevitable omissions.

THE STAIN OF INDIGO

Champaran used to be full of indigo plantations until the year 1917. The Champaran tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the *tinkathia* system.

I did not then know even the name of Champaran, and I had hardly any notion of indigo plantations. I had little dreamed that indigo was grown and manufactured in Champaran at great hardship to thousands of agriculturists. Rajkumar Shukla was one of the agriculturists who had been under this harrow, and he was filled with a passion to wash away the stain of indigo for the thousands who were suffering as he had suffered. This man caught hold of me at Lucknow, where I had gone for the Congress of 1916. "*Vakil Babu* will tell you everything about our distress," he said, and urged me to go to Champaran. 'Vakil Babu' was none other than Babu Brajkishore Prasad, who is the soul of public work in Bihar. Having heard from him something of Champaran, I replied as was my wont: "I can give no opinion without seeing the condition with my own eyes." Babu Brajkishore Prasad moved the resolution, expressing sympathy for the people of Champaran, and it was unanimously passed. Rajkumar Shukla was glad, but far from satisfied. He wanted me personally to visit Champaran and witness the miseries of the *ryots* there. I told

him that I would include Champaran in the tour which I had contemplated and give it a day or two.

From Lucknow I went to Cawnpore. Rajkumar Shukla followed me there. "Champaran is very near here. Please give a day," he insisted. "Pray excuse me this time. But I promise that I will come," said I, further committing myself. I returned to the *Ashram*. The ubiquitous Rajkumar was there too. "Pray fix the day now," he said. "Well," said I, "I have to be in Calcutta on such and such a date; come and meet me then, and take me from there." Before I reached Bhupen Babu's place in Calcutta, Rajkumar Shukla had gone and established himself there. Thus this unsophisticated but resolute agriculturist captured me. So, early in 1917, we left Calcutta for Champaran, looking just like fellow rustics, reaching Patna in the morning.

This was my first visit to Patna. I had no friend or acquaintance with whom I could think of putting up. I had an idea that Rajkumar Shukla, simple agriculturist though he was, must have some influence in Patna. He was perfectly innocent of everything. The *vakils* that he had taken to be his friends were really nothing of the sort. Poor Rajkumar was more or less as a menial to them. Between such agriculturist clients and their *vakils* there is a gulf as wide as the Ganges in flood.

Rajkumar Shukla took me to Rajendra Babu's place in Patna. Rajendra Babu had gone to some place. There were one or two servants at the bungalow who paid us no attention. There was strict untouchability in Bihar. I might not draw water at the well whilst the servants were using it, lest drops of water from my bucket might pollute them, the servants not knowing to what caste I belonged. Rajkumar directed me to the indoor latrine, the servant promptly directed me to the outdoor one. All this was far from surprising to me, for I was inured to such things. The servants were doing the duty which they thought Rajendra Babu would wish them to do. These

entertaining experiences enhanced my regard for Rajkumar Shukla, if they also enabled me to know him better. I saw now that Rajkumar Shukla could not guide me, and that I must take the reins in my own hands.

Maulana Mazharul Haq suggested that I should first go to Muzaffarpur. Principal [J.B.] Kripalani used to be a professor in the Government College, Muzaffarpur, and had just resigned the post when I went there. He had established very close contact with the Biharis, and had already spoken to them about the mission that took me to Bihar. In the morning, a small group of vakils called on me. I still remember Ramnavmi Prasad among them, as his earnestness specially appealed to me.

He said, "You must come and stay with one of us. Gaya Babu is a well-known vakil here. I have come on his behalf to invite you to stay with him. I confess we are all afraid of Government, but we shall render what help we can. Most of the things Rajkumar Shukla has told you are true. It is a pity our leaders are not here today. I have, however, wired to them both, Brajkishore Prasad and Rajendra Prasad. I expect them to arrive shortly, and they are sure to be able to give you all the information you want and to help you considerably. Pray come over to Gaya Babu's place." So I went over to stay with him.

Brajkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu now arrived. Soon I felt myself becoming bound to this circle of friends in lifelong friendship. Brajkishore Babu acquainted me with the facts of the case. He used to be in the habit of taking up the cases of the poor tenants. The figures of the fees they charged staggered me.

"Having studied these cases," said I, "I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to law courts. Taking such cases to the courts does little good. Where the *ryots* are so crushed and fear-stricken, courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear. We cannot sit still until we have driven *tinkathia* out of Bihar. I had thought that I should be able to leave here in two days, but I now realize that the work might take even two years. I am prepared to give that

time, if necessary. I am now feeling my ground, but I want your help."

I found Brajkishore Babu exceptionally coolheaded. "We shall render all the help we can," he said quietly, "but pray tell us what kind of help you will need." And thus we sat talking until midnight. "I shall have little use for your legal knowledge," I said to them. "I want clerical assistance and help in interpretation. It may be necessary to face imprisonment, but, much as I would love you to run that risk, you would go only so far as you feel yourselves capable of going. Even turning yourselves into clerks and giving up your profession for an indefinite period is no small thing. I find it difficult to understand the local dialect of Hindi, and I shall not be able to read papers written in Kaithi or Urdu. I shall want you to translate them for me. We cannot afford to pay for this work. It should all be done for love and out of a spirit of service."

Ultimately they gave me this assurance. "Such and such a number of us will do whatever you may ask. Some of us will be with you for so much time as you may require. The idea of accommodating oneself to imprisonment is a novel thing for us. We will try to assimilate it."

FACE TO FACE WITH NON-VIOLENCE

My object was to inquire into the condition of the Champaran agriculturists and understand their grievances against the indigo planters. For this purpose it was necessary that I should meet thousands of the *ryots*. But I deemed it essential, before starting on my inquiry, to know the planters' side of the case and see the Commissioner of the Division. I sought and was granted appointments with both. The Secretary of the Planters' Association told me plainly that I was an outsider and that I had no business to come between the planters and their tenants;

but if I had any representation to make, I might submit it in writing. I politely told him that I did not regard myself as an outsider, and that I had every right to inquire into the condition of the tenants if they desired me to do so.

Rajkumar Shukla's place was in the vicinity of Bettiah, and the tenants belonging to the *kothis* in its neighborhood were the poorest in the district. Rajkumar Shukla wanted me to see them. So I started for Motihari. The very same day, we heard that about five miles from Motihari a tenant had been ill-treated. It was decided that, in company with Dharanidhar Prasad, I should go and see him the next morning, and we accordingly set off for the place on elephant's back. An elephant, by the way, is about as common in Champaran as a bullock-cart in Gujarat. We had scarcely gone half way when a messenger from the Police Superintendent overtook us and said that the latter had sent his compliments. I saw what he meant. Having left Dharanidhar Babu to proceed to the original destination, I got into the carriage which the messenger had brought. He then served on me a notice to leave Champaran, and drove me to my place. On his asking me to acknowledge the service of the notice, I wrote to the effect that I did not propose to comply with it and leave Champaran till my inquiry was finished. Thereupon I received a summons to take my trial the next day for disobeying the order to leave Champaran.

I kept awake that whole night writing letters and giving necessary instructions to Brajkishore Prasad. The news of the notice and the summons spread like wildfire. Gorakh Babu's house and the court house overflowed with men. Fortunately, I had finished all my work during the night and so was able to cope with the crowds.

A sort of friendliness sprang up between the officials – Collector, Magistrate, Police Superintendent – and myself. I might have legally resisted the notices served on me. Instead I accepted them all, and my conduct towards the officials was

correct. They thus saw that I did not want to offend them personally, but that I wanted to offer civil resistance to their orders. In this way they were put at ease and, instead of harassing me, they gladly availed themselves of my and my co-workers' co-operation in regulating the crowds. But it was demonstration to them of the fact that their authority was shaken. The people had for the moment lost all fear of punishment and yielded obedience to the power of love which their new friend exercised. It should be remembered that no one knew me in Champaran. The peasants were all ignorant. Champaran, being far up north of the Ganges, and right at the foot of the Himalayas in close proximity to Nepal, was cut off from the rest of India. The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet, they received me as though we had been age-long friends.

That day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life and a red-letter day for the peasants and for me. According to the law, I was to be on my trial. But truly speaking, Government was to be on its trial;.

The trial began. The Government pleader, the Magistrate and other officials were on tenterhooks. They were at a loss to know what to do. The Government pleader was pressing the Magistrate to postpone the case. But I interfered and requested the Magistrate not to postpone the case, as I wanted to plead guilty to having disobeyed the order to leave Champaran, and read a brief statement as follows:

"With the permission of the Court, I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order passed under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the *ryots*, who urge that they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the

assistance, if possible, of the Administration and the planters. I have no other motive, and cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differently. As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that the only honorable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do; that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the voice of conscience."

There was now no occasion to postpone the hearing, but as both the Magistrate and the Government pleader had been taken by surprise, the Magistrate postponed judgment. Meanwhile, I had wired full details to the Viceroy and others. Before I could appear before the Court to receive the sentence, the Magistrate sent a written message that the Lieutenant Governor had ordered the case against me to be withdrawn, and the Collector wrote to me saying that I was at liberty to conduct the proposed inquiry, and that I might count on whatever help I needed from the officials. None of us was prepared for this prompt and happy issue. I called on the Collector Mr. Heycock. He told me that I might ask for whatever papers I desired to see, and that I was at liberty to see him whenever I liked. The country thus had its first direct object-lesson in Civil Disobe-

dience. The affair was freely discussed both locally and in the press, and my inquiry got unexpected publicity.

The planters engineered against me a poisonous agitation. All sorts of falsehoods appeared in the press about my co-workers and myself. But my extreme cautiousness and my insistence on truth, even to the minutest detail, turned the edge of their sword.

METHODS OF WORK

The curious ways of living of my companions in the early days were a constant theme of raillery at their expense. Each of the vakils had a servant and a cook, and therefore a separate kitchen, and they often had their dinner as late as midnight. Though they paid their own expenses, their irregularity worried me; but as we had become close friends there was no possibility of a misunderstanding between us, and they received my ridicule in good part. Ultimately it was agreed that the servants should be dispensed with, that all the kitchens should be amalgamated, and that regular hours should be observed. As all were not vegetarians, and as two kitchens would have been expensive, a common vegetarian kitchen was decided upon. It was also felt necessary to insist on simple meals. These arrangements considerably reduced the expenses and saved us a lot of time and energy.

Crowds of peasants came to make their statements, and they were followed by an army of companions who filled the compound and garden to overflowing. At least five to seven volunteers were required to take down statements, and even then some people had to go away in the evening without being able to make their statements. Those who took down the statements had to observe certain rules. Each peasant had to be closely cross-examined, and whoever failed to satisfy the

test was rejected. This entailed a lot of extra time but most of the statements were thus rendered incontrovertible.

An officer from the C.I.D. would always be present when these statements were recorded. We had decided from the very beginning to treat them with courtesy and to give them all the information that it was possible to give them. As I did not want to irritate the planters, but to win them over by gentleness, I made a point of writing to and meeting such of them against whom allegations of a serious nature were made. I met the Planters' Association as well, placed the *ryots*' grievances before them and acquainted myself with their point of view.

As I gained more experience of Bihar, I became convinced that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education. The *ryots*' ignorance was pathetic. They either allowed their children to roam about, or made them toil on indigo plantations from morning to night for a couple of coppers a day. In consultation with my companions, I decided to open primary schools in six villages. One of our conditions with the villagers was that they should provide the teachers with board and lodging while we would see to the other expenses. The village folk had hardly any cash in their hands, but they could well afford to provide foodstuffs.

From where to get the teachers was a great problem. It was difficult to find local teachers who would work for a bare allowance or without remuneration. My idea was never to entrust children to commonplace teachers. Their literary qualification was not so essential as their moral fiber. So I issued a public appeal for voluntary teachers. It received a ready response. But I did not want to stop at providing for primary education. The villages were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the wells surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy. The elder people badly needed education in cleanliness. They were all suffering from various

skin diseases. So it was decided to do as much sanitary work as possible and to penetrate every department of their lives.

As far as was possible we placed each school in charge of one man and one woman. These volunteers had to look after medical relief and sanitation. Medical relief was a very simple affair. Castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment were the only drugs provided to the volunteers. If the patient showed a furred tongue or complained of constipation, castor oil was administered; in case of fever, quinine was given after an opening dose of castor oil; and the sulphur ointment was applied in case of boils and itch after thoroughly washing the affected parts. No patient was permitted to take home any medicine. Quite a number of people availed themselves of this simple relief.

It may not be out of place here to narrate an experience that I have described at many meetings. Bhitiharva was a small village in which was one of our schools. I happened to visit a smaller village in its vicinity and found some of the women dressed very dirtily. So I told my wife to ask them why they did not wash their clothes. She spoke to them. One of the women took her into her hut and said: "Look now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The sari I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another sari, and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day." This cottage was not an exception, but a type to be found in many Indian villages. In countless cottages in India, people live without a change of clothes, merely with a rag to cover their shame.

Thus, the volunteers with their schools, sanitation work and medical relief gained the confidence and respect of the village folk, and were able to bring good influence to bear upon them. But I must confess with regret that my hope of putting this constructive work on a permanent footing was not fulfilled. The volunteers had come for temporary periods, I could not secure any more from outside, and permanent honorary workers

from Bihar were not available. As soon as my work in Champaran was finished, work outside drew me away.

Whilst social service work was being carried out, the work of recording statements of the *ryots*' grievances was progressing apace. Thousands of such statements were taken, and they could not but have their effect. The ever growing number of *ryots* coming to make their statements increased the planters' wrath, and they moved heaven and earth to counteract my inquiry. One day I received a letter from the Bihar Government to the following effect: "Your inquiry had been sufficiently prolonged; should you not now bring it to an end and leave Bihar?" The letter was couched in polite language, but its meaning was obvious. I wrote in reply that the inquiry was bound to be prolonged, and unless and until it resulted in bringing relief to the people, I had no intention of leaving Bihar.

Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor, asked me to see him, expressed his willingness to appoint an inquiry and invited me to be a member of the Committee. I agreed to serve on the Committee, on condition that Government should recognize that, by being a member of the Committee, I did not cease to be the *ryots*' advocate, and that in case the result of the inquiry failed to give me satisfaction, I should be free to guide and advise the *ryots* as to what line of action they should take. Sir Edward Gait accepted the condition as just and proper and announced the inquiry. The Committee recommended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions made by them which the Committee had found to be unlawful, and that the *tinkathia* system should be abolished by law. The *tinkathia* system which had been in existence for about a century was thus abolished and with it the planters' *raj* came to an end. The *ryots*, who had all along remained crushed, now somewhat came to their own, and the superstition that the stain of indigo could never be washed out was exploded.

IN TOUCH WITH LABOR

Whilst I was yet winding up my work on the Committee, I received a letter telling me of the failure of crops in the Kheda district [in Gujarat] and asking me to guide the peasants, who were unable to pay the [revenue] assessment. I had not the inclination to advise without an inquiry on the spot.

At the same time there came a letter from Anasuyabehn about the condition of labor in Ahmedabad. Wages were low, the laborers had long been agitating for an increment, and I had a desire to guide them if I could. So I seized the first opportunity to go to Ahmedabad. I had hoped that I should be able to finish both these matters quickly and get back to Champaran to supervise the constructive work that had been inaugurated there. But things did not move as swiftly as I had wished, and I was unable to return to Champaran, with the result that the schools closed down one by one. My co-workers and I had built many castles in the air, but they all vanished for the time being.

Whilst the Kheda peasants' question was still being discussed, I had already taken up the question of the mill-hands in Ahmedabad. I was in a most delicate situation. The mill-hands' case was strong. Anasuyabehn had to battle against her own brother, Ambalal Sarabhai, who led the fray on behalf of the mill-owners. My relations with them were friendly, and that made fighting with them the more difficult. I held consultations with them, and requested them to refer the dispute to arbitration, but they refused to recognize the principle of arbitration. I had therefore to advise the laborers to go on strike. Before I did so, I came in very close contact with them and their leaders, and explained to them the conditions of a successful strike: 1. never to resort to violence, 2. never to molest blacklegs, 3. never to depend upon alms, and 4. to remain firm, no matter how long the strike continued,

and to earn bread during the strike by any other honest labor. The leaders of the strike understood and accepted the conditions, and the laborers pledged themselves at a general meeting not to resume work until either their terms were accepted or the mill-owners agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration.

We had daily meetings of the strikers under the shade of a tree on the bank of the Sabarmati. They attended the meeting in their thousands, and I reminded them in my speeches of their pledge and of the duty to maintain peace and self-respect. They daily paraded the streets of the city in peaceful procession, carrying their banner bearing the inscription *Ek Tek* (keep the pledge). The strike went on for twenty-one days. During the continuance of the strike, I consulted the mill-owners from time to time and entreated them to do justice to the laborers. "We have our pledge too," they used to say. "Our relations with the laborers are those of parents and children... How can we brook the interference of a third party? Where is the room for arbitration?"

THE FAST

For the first two weeks the mill-hands exhibited great courage and self-restraint and daily held monster meetings. On these occasions I used to remind them of their pledge, and they would shout back to me the assurance that they would rather die than break their word. But at last they began to show signs of flagging. Their attitude towards the blacklegs became more and more menacing as the strike seemed to weaken, and I began to fear an outbreak of rowdyism on their part. The attendance at their daily meetings also began to dwindle by degrees, and despondency and despair were writ large on the faces of those who did attend. Finally the strikers had begun

to totter. I felt deeply troubled and set to thinking furiously as to what my duty was in the circumstances. The mill-hands had taken the pledge at my suggestion. They had repeated it before me day after day, and the very idea that they might now go back upon it was to me inconceivable.

One morning – it was at a mill-hands' meeting – while I was still groping and unable to see my way clearly, the light came to me. Unbidden and all by themselves the words came to my lips: "Unless the strikers rally," I declared to the meeting, "and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food."

The laborers broke out, "Not you but we shall fast. It would be monstrous if you were to fast. Please forgive us for our lapse, we will now remain faithful to our pledge to the end."

"There is no need for you to fast," I replied. "It would be enough if you could remain true to your pledge. As you know we are without funds, and we do not want to continue our strike by living on public charity. You should therefore try to eke out a bare existence by some kind of labor, so that you may be able to remain unconcerned, no matter how long the strike may continue. As for my fast, it will be broken only after the strike is settled."

The principal man at the back of the mill-owners' unbending attitude towards the strike was Sheth Ambalal. His resolute will and transparent sincerity captured my heart. It was a pleasure to be pitched against him. Anasuyabehn and other friends and laborers shared the fast with me on the first day. But after some difficulty I was able to dissuade them from continuing it further. The net result of it was that an atmosphere of goodwill was created all round. The hearts of the mill-owners were touched, and they set about discovering some means for a settlement. Anandshankar Dhruv intervened and was in the end appointed arbitrator, and the strike was called off after I had fasted only for three days. The mill-owners

commemorated the event by distributing sweets among the laborers, and thus a settlement was reached after 21 days' strike.

I must not close this chapter without noting here an incident, as amusing as it was pathetic. It happened in connection with the distribution of sweets. The mill-owners had ordered a very large quantity. It was decided that it would be the fittest thing to distribute it in the open, beneath the very tree under which the pledge had been taken. I had taken it for granted that the men who had observed strict discipline for full 21 days would be able to remain standing in an orderly manner while the sweets were being distributed. But when it came to the test, again and again their ranks would break into confusion after distribution had proceeded for a couple of minutes. The leaders of the mill-hands tried their best to restore order, but in vain. The confusion, the crush and the scramble at last became so great that quite an amount of the sweets was trampled under foot, and the attempt to distribute them in the open had finally to be given up. Subsequent inquiry revealed the fact that the beggar population of Ahmedabad, having got scent of the fact that sweets were to be distributed under the *Ek Tek* tree, had gone there in large numbers, and it was their hungry scramble for the sweets that had created all the confusion and disorder. The grinding poverty and starvation with which our country is afflicted is such that it drives more and more men every year into the ranks of the beggars, whose desperate struggle for bread renders them insensible to all feelings of self-respect. And our philanthropists, instead of providing work for them and insisting on their working for bread, give them alms.

SATYAGRAHA IN KHEDA

Hardly was the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike over, when I had to plunge into the Kheda *satyagraha* struggle. A condition approaching famine had arisen in the Kheda district owing to a widespread failure of crops, and the *patidars* were considering the question of getting the revenue assessment for the year suspended. Amritlal Thakkar had already inquired into and reported on the situation and personally discussed the question with the Commissioner. More than one deputation had waited upon the Governor in that connection. The cultivators' demand was as clear as daylight. But the Government was in no mood to listen. At last, all petitioning and prayer having failed, after taking counsel with co-workers, I advised the Patidars to resort to *satyagraha*. The following pledge was signed by the *satyagrahis*:

"Knowing that the crops of our villages are less than four annas [25 per cent], we requested the Government to suspend the collection of revenue assessment till the ensuing year, but the Government had not acceded to our prayer. Therefore, we, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that we shall not, of our own accord, pay to the Government the revenue for the year. We shall let the Government take whatever legal steps it may think fit and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited than that by voluntary payment we should compromise our self-respect. Should the Government, however, agree to suspend collection of the second installment of the assessment throughout the district, such amongst us as are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that, if they pay up, the poorer *ryots* may in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In these circumstances we feel

that, for the sake of the poor, it is the duty even of those who can afford to pay to withhold payment of their assessment."

For the *patidar* farmers, the fight was quite a new thing. We had, therefore, to go about from village to village explaining the principles of *satyagraha*. The main thing was to rid the agriculturists of their fear by making them realize that the officials were not the masters but the servants of the people, inasmuch as they received their salaries from the taxpayer. And then, it seemed well nigh impossible to make them realize the duty of combining civility with fearlessness.

In the initial stages, though the people exhibited much courage, the Government did not seem inclined to take strong action. But as the people's firmness showed no signs of wavering, the Government began coercion. The attachment officers sold people's cattle and seized whatever movables they could lay hands on. Standing crops were attached. This unnerved the peasants, some of whom paid up their dues. On the other hand some were prepared to fight to the bitter end. It was clear that the people were exhausted, and I hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin. I was casting about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle which would be acceptable to a *satyagrahi*. Such a one appeared quite unexpectedly. The *Mamlatdar* of the Nadiad *taluka* sent me word that, if well-to-do Patidars paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension. I asked for a written undertaking to that effect, which was given. But as a *Mamlatdar* could be responsible only for his *taluka*, I inquired of the Collector, whether the *Mamlatdar's* undertaking was true for the whole district. He replied that orders declaring suspension in terms of the *Mamlatdar's* letter had been already issued. The campaign came to an unexpected end.

The Kheda *satyagraha* marks the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat, the beginning of their true political education. The lesson was indelibly imprinted on the public mind that the salvation of the people depends upon

themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice. Through the Kheda campaign, *satyagraha* took firm root in the soil of Gujarat.

THAT WONDERFUL SPECTACLE!

I happened casually to read in the papers the Rowlatt Committee's report which had just been published. Its recommendations seemed to me to be such that no self-respecting people could submit to them. Thus, while on the one hand the agitation against the Rowlatt Committee's report gathered volume and intensity, on the other the Government grew more and more determined to give effect to its recommendations, and the Rowlatt Bill was published.

I earnestly pleaded with the Viceroy. I addressed him private letters as also public letters, in the course of which I clearly told him that the Government's action left me no other course except to resort to *satyagraha*. But it was all in vain. We discussed plans of the fight, but beyond the holding of public meetings, I could not then think of any other program. While these cogitations were still going on, news was received that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual. I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me – it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari: "The idea came to me last night in a dream that we should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal* [strike]. Ours is a sacred fight, and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore,

suspend their business on that day and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer."

I drafted a brief appeal. The date of the *hartal* was first fixed on the 30th March 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6th April. The people thus had only a short notice. The whole of India from one end to the other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete *hartal* on that day. It was a most wonderful spectacle. On the morning of the 6th the citizens of Bombay flocked in their thousands to the Chowpati for a bath in the sea, after which they moved on in a procession. The procession included a fair sprinkling of women and children, while the Musalmans joined it in large numbers.

The *hartal* in Bombay was a complete success. It was decided that civil disobedience might be offered in respect of such laws only as easily lent themselves to being disobeyed by the masses. The salt tax was extremely unpopular and a powerful movement had been going on to secure its repeal. I therefore suggested that the people might prepare salt from sea-water in their own houses in disregard of the salt laws. My other suggestion was about the sale of proscribed literature. Two of my books, *Hind Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya* (Gujarati adaptation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*), which had already been proscribed, came handy for this purpose. To print and sell them openly seemed to be the easiest way of offering civil disobedience and it was arranged to sell them at the end of the monster meeting that was to be held that evening.

On the evening of the 6th an army of volunteers issued forth accordingly with this prohibited literature to sell it among the people. All the copies were soon sold out. The proceeds of the sale were to be utilized for furthering the civil disobedience campaign. Both these books were priced at four annas per copy, but a large number of people simply poured out all the cash that was in their pockets. Five and ten rupee notes just flew out to cover the price of a single copy. It was duly explained to the people that they were liable to be arrested

and imprisoned for purchasing the proscribed literature. But for the moment they had shed all fear of jail-going.

The next morning another meeting was held for the administration of the pledges with regard to *swadeshi* and Hindu-Muslim unity. Only a handful of persons came. I had already drafted the pledge. I thoroughly explained its meaning to those present before I administered it to them. The paucity of the attendance neither pained nor surprised me, for I have noticed this characteristic difference in the popular attitude – partiality for exciting work, dislike for quiet constructive effort. The difference has persisted to this day.

On the night of the 7th, I started for Delhi and Amritsar. Before the train had reached Palwal station, I was served with a written order to the effect that I was prohibited from entering the boundary of the Punjab, as my presence there was likely to result in a disturbance of the peace. I was asked by the police to get down from the train. I refused to do so saying, "I want to go to the Punjab in response to a pressing invitation – not to foment unrest, but to allay it. I am therefore sorry that it is not possible for me to comply with this order." I was taken out of the train and put under police custody. A train from Delhi came in a short time. I was made to enter a third class carriage, the police party accompanying.

"You are now free," the officer told me when we had reached Bombay. "It would however be better," he added, "if you get down near the Marine Lines where I shall get the train stopped for you. At Colaba there is likely to be a big crowd." I told him that I would be glad to follow his wish. Accordingly I alighted at the Marine Lines. The carriage of a friend just happened to be passing by. It took me and left me at Revashankar Jhaveri's place. The friend told me that the news of my arrest had incensed the people and roused them to a pitch of mad frenzy. Umar Sobani and Anasuyabehn asked me to motor to Pydhuni at once. "The people are very much excited," they said, "we cannot pacify them. Your presence

alone can do it." Near Pydhuni I saw that a huge crowd had gathered. On seeing me the people went mad with joy. A procession was immediately formed, and the sky was rent with the shouts of *Vande Mataram* and *Allahu Akbar*.

As the procession was about to proceed, it suddenly found itself confronted by a body of the mounted police, who had arrived there to prevent it from proceeding further. At once the mounted party charged upon the crowd, brandishing their lances as they went. The ranks of the people were soon broken, and they were thrown into utter confusion, which was soon converted into a rout. Some got trampled under foot, others were badly mauled and crushed. In that seething mass of humanity there was hardly any room for the horses to pass, nor was there an exit by which the people could disperse. So the lancers blindly cut their way through the crowd. The whole thing presented a most dreadful spectacle. Thus the crowd was dispersed. Our motorcar was allowed to proceed. I had it stopped before the Commissioner's office, and got down to complain to him about the conduct of the police.

I described to the Commissioner the scenes I had witnessed. He replied briefly: "I did not want the procession to proceed to the Fort [area], as a disturbance was inevitable there. And as I saw that the people would not listen to persuasion, I could not help ordering the mounted police to charge through the crowd."

"But," said I, "you knew what the consequences must be. The horses were bound to trample on the people. I think it was quite unnecessary to send that contingent of mounted men."

"You cannot judge that," said Mr. Griffith. "We police officers know better than you the effect of your teaching on the people. If we did not start with drastic measures, the situation would pass out of our hands. I tell you that the people are sure to go out of your control. Disobedience of law will quickly appeal to them; it is beyond them to understand the

duty of keeping peaceful. I have no doubt about your intentions, but the people will not understand them. They will follow their natural instinct."

"It is there that I join issue with you," I replied. "The people are not by nature violent but peaceful."

And thus we argued at length. Ultimately Mr. Griffith said, "But suppose you were convinced that your teaching had been lost on the people, what would you do?"

"I should suspend civil disobedience if I were so convinced."

"If you will be patient, the conviction is sure to grow on you. Do you know what is happening in Ahmedabad? And what has happened in Amritsar? People have everywhere gone nearly mad. I am not yet in possession of all the facts. The telegraph wires have been cut in some places. I put it to you that the responsibility for all these disturbances lies on you."

"I assure you I should readily take it upon myself wherever I discovered it. But I should be deeply pained and surprised, if I found that there were disturbances in Ahmedabad. I cannot answer for Amritsar. I have never been there, no one knows me there. But even about the Punjab I am certain of this much that, had not the Punjab Government prevented my entry into the Punjab, I should have been considerably helpful in keeping the peace there. By preventing me, they gave the people unnecessary provocation."

And so we argued on and on. It was impossible for us to agree. I told him that I intended to address a meeting on Chowpati and to ask the people to keep the peace, and took leave of him.

The meeting was held on the Chowpati sands. I spoke at length on the duty of non-violence and on the limitations of *satyagraha*, and said: "*Satyagraha* is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A *satyagrahi* is pledged to non-violence, and unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass *satyagraha*."

Anasuyabehn, too, had received news of disturbances in Ahmedabad. Someone had spread a rumor that she had been arrested. The mill-hands had gone mad over her rumored arrest, struck work and committed acts of violence, and a sergeant had been done to death. I proceeded to Ahmedabad. I learned that an attempt had been made to pull up the rails near the Nadiad railway station, that a Government officer had been murdered in Viramgam, and that Ahmedabad was under martial law. The people were terror-stricken. They had indulged in acts of violence and were being made to pay for them with interest.

'A HIMALAYAN MISCALCULATION'

A police officer was waiting at the station to escort me to Mr. Pratt, the Commissioner. I found him in a state of rage. I spoke to him gently, and expressed my regret for the disturbances. I suggested that martial law was unnecessary, and declared my readiness to co-operate in all efforts to restore peace. I asked for permission to hold a public meeting on the grounds of the Sabarmati *Ashram*. The proposal appealed to him, and the meeting was held, I think, on Sunday, the 13th of April, and martial law was withdrawn. Addressing the meeting, I tried to bring home to the people the sense of their wrong, declared a penitential fast of three days for myself, appealed to the people to go on a similar fast for a day, and suggested to those who had been guilty of acts of violence to confess their guilt. I saw my duty as clear as daylight. It was unbearable for me to find that the laborers, amongst whom I had spent a good deal of my time, whom I had served, and from whom I had expected better things, had taken part in the riots, and I felt I was a sharer in their guilt.

Just as I suggested to the people to confess their guilt, I

suggested to the Government to condone the crimes. Neither accepted my suggestion. Sir Ramanbhai and other citizens of Ahmedabad came to me with an appeal to suspend *satyagraha*. I had already made up my mind to suspend *satyagraha* so long as people had not learned the lesson of peace. The friends went away happy. There were, however, others who were unhappy over the decision. They felt that, if I expected peace everywhere and regarded it as a condition precedent to launching *satyagraha*, mass *satyagraha* would be an impossibility. I was sorry to disagree with them. If those amongst whom I worked, and whom I expected to be prepared for non-violence and self-suffering, could not be non-violent, *satyagraha* was certainly impossible. I was firmly of opinion that those who wanted to lead the people to *satyagraha* ought to be able to keep the people within the limited non-violence expected of them. I hold the same opinion even today.

Almost immediately after the Ahmedabad meeting, I went to Nadiad. It was here that I first used the expression 'Himalayan miscalculation' which obtained such a wide currency afterwards. Even at Ahmedabad, I had begun to have a dim perception of my mistake. But when I reached Nadiad and saw the actual state of things there and heard reports about a large number of people having been arrested, it suddenly dawned upon me that I had committed a grave error in calling upon the people to launch upon civil disobedience prematurely. I was addressing a public meeting. My confession brought down upon me no small amount of ridicule. But I have always held that it is only when one sees one's own mistakes with a convex lens, and does just the reverse in the case of others, that one is able to arrive at a just relative estimate of the two.

Let us now see what that Himalayan miscalculation was. Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience, one must have rendered a willing obedience to the laws. For the most part we obey such laws out of fear of penalty, and this

holds good particularly in respect of such laws as do not involve a moral principle. For instance, an honest, respectable man will not suddenly take to stealing, whether there is a law against stealing or not. But, this very man will not feel any remorse for failure to observe the rule about carrying headlights on bicycles after dark. But, he would observe any obligatory rule of this kind, if only to escape the inconvenience of facing prosecution. A *satyagrahi* obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just, and which unjust. Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws. My error lay in my failure to observe this necessary limitation. I had called on the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified themselves for it, and this mistake seemed to me of Himalayan magnitude. As soon as I entered the Kheda district, all the old recollections of the Kheda *satyagraha* struggle came back to me, and I wondered how I could have failed to perceive what was so obvious.

Government's policy of lawless repression was in full career. Leaders were put under arrest, martial law was proclaimed, special tribunals were set up. Sentences were passed in flagrant violation of justice.

Just then Mr. Horniman, in whose hands *The Bombay Chronicle* had became a formidable force, was suddenly spirited away by the authorities. As a result of these developments I was asked by the directors of *The Bombay Chronicle* to take up the responsibility of conducting that paper. But by the Government's order, the publication of *The Chronicle* had to be suspended. The friends who were directing the management of The Chronicle, were at this time also controlling Young India. They suggested that, in view of the suppression of The Chronicle, I should now take up the editorship of Young India.

I was anxious to expound the inner meaning of *satyagraha* to the public. I therefore readily accepted the suggestion.

But how could the general public be trained in *satyagraha* through the medium of English? Indulal Yajnik was at that time conducting the Gujarati monthly *Navajivan* which had the financial backing of these friends. They placed the monthly at my disposal. This monthly was converted into a weekly. Through these journals, I now commenced to the best of my ability the work of educating the reading public in *satyagraha*. Both of them had reached a very wide circulation. From the very start I set my face against taking advertisements in these journals.

FOUND AT LAST!

I do not remember to have seen a handloom or a spinning wheel when in 1908 I described it in *Hind Swaraj* as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India. Even in 1915, when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning wheel. When the 'Satyagraha Ashram' was founded, we introduced a few handlooms there. The object was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We therefore forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth, and all the members of the *Ashram* resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only. We became impatient to be able to spin our own yarn. We could get neither a spinning wheel nor a spinner to teach us how to spin.

In 1917, I was taken by friends to preside at the Broach Educational Conference. It was here that I discovered that remarkable lady Gangabehn Majmudar. Her enterprising spirit knew no bounds. Her education, in the accepted sense of the term, was not much. But in courage and commonsense she

easily surpassed the general run of our educated women. She had already got rid of the curse of untouchability, and fearlessly moved among and served the suppressed classes. Her needs were few. She had a well seasoned constitution, and went about everywhere without an escort. She felt quite at home on horseback. To her I poured out my grief about the *charkha*, and she lightened my burden by a promise to prosecute an earnest search for the spinning wheel.

At last, after no end of wandering in Gujarat, Gangabehn found the spinning wheel in Vijapur. Quite a number of people there had spinning wheels in their homes, but had long since consigned them to the lofts as useless lumber. They expressed their readiness to resume spinning, if someone provide them with a regular supply of slivers, and to buy the yarn spun by them. Gangabehn trained a few youngsters to make slivers out of the carded cotton. Maganlal, by bringing to bear all his splendid mechanical talent on the wheel, made many improvements in it, and wheels and their accessories began to be manufactured at the *Ashram*.

FAREWELL

The time has now come to bring these chapters to a close. My life from this point onward has been so public that there is hardly anything about it that people do not know. Moreover, since 1921 I have worked in such close association with the Congress leaders that I can hardly describe any episode in my life since then without referring to my relations with them. And this I may not do, at any rate for the present, if only from a sense of propriety. It therefore seems to me to be my plain duty to close this narrative here.

It is not without a wrench that I have to take leave of the reader. I have spared no pains to give a faithful narrative.

To describe truth, as it has appeared to me, and in the exact manner in which I have arrived at it, has been my ceaseless effort. To see the universal and all-pervading 'Spirit of Truth' face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics.

Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification. But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; [and] to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity, in spite of ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world's praise fails to move me, indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms. Ever since my return to India I have had experiences of the dormant passions lying hidden within me. The knowledge of them has made me feel humiliated though not defeated. I know that I have still before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him.

In bidding farewell to the reader, for the time being at any rate, I ask him to join with me in prayer to the God of Truth that He may grant me the boon of *ahimsa* [non-violence] in mind, word and deed.

GLOSSARY

Ahimsā Non-violence

Āshram A retreat for community living

Āyurveda Ancient Hindu system of medicine

Bāpu Father

Bhagavad Gitā A poem of 700 stanzas, part of the *Mahābhārata*

Bhajan Hymn

Brahmacharya Continence, sexual self-restraint

Brāhmin The highest caste in Hinduism

Charkhā The hand-spinning wheel

Coolie A porter

Crore 10 million

Dharma Religion or religious duty

Gitā *See Bhagavad Gitā*

Goondās Hooligans

Guru Spiritual guide

Harijans A term given by Gandhi to the untouchables. *See* Untouchables

Hartāl Cessation of work, strike

Haveli A temple of the Vaishnava faith

Hindi The language of northern India

Hindu Mahāsabhā A political party of orthodox Hindus

Khādi Hand-spun and hand-woven cloth

Khilāfat A Pan-Islamic movement in India in response to the deposal of the Sultan of Turkey (who was Caliph of Islam) as a result of Turkey's defeat in World War I

Lākh 100,000

Lāthi A long stick

Mahābhārata A national epic

Mahātmā Great soul

Manusmriti Laws of Manu, an ancient Hindu religious code

Maulānā A religious teacher of Islam

Mussulmān Follower of Islam; frequent Indian spelling of Mohammedan

Pandit A learned man or teacher

Pārsi A Zoroastrian of India descended from Persian refugees

Pathāns Mohammedan people of undivided India's northwest frontier

Purānas Sacred Hindu legends

Rāma The divine incarnation of the Supreme Being in human form as described in the epic, *Rāmāyana*

Rāmanāma The constant repetition of the name Rāma, as an act of devotion to the Lord

Rāmāyana A sacred Indian epic

Rupee The monetary unit of India

Sanātani An orthodox Hindu

Sardār A title meaning leader

Sāri The principal garment of an Indian woman, being a long piece of cloth wrapped around the waist, a portion covering the bosom and the head

Satyāgraha Truth-force or soul-force; non-violent direct action

Satyāgrahi One who practices *satyagraha*

Shāstras Scriptures

Sheth Master

Shudra The fourth (and lowest) caste of Hinduism; those who labor

Sikh Member of a religious sect founded about the year 1500 in the Punjab

Swadeshi Belonging to, or made in, one's own country; applied to the movement for boycott of foreign goods

Swarāj Self-government; independence

Untouchables Castes which are looked upon as impure by orthodox Hindus. Also called Scheduled Castes, Depressed Classes, Pariahs, and Harijans

Upanishads Hindu religious philosophical discourses

Vaishnava A sect of Hindu worshiping God Vishnu

Vaishya The third caste in Hinduism – those who trade and farm

Varna Caste

Vedānta An important Hindu philosophical system

Vedas Earliest Hindu religious hymns

INDEX

SPECIMEN OF ABRIDGMENT

3

1. BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

The Gandhis ~~belong to the Bania caste and seem to have been originally grocers. But~~ for three generations, from my grandfather, ~~they~~ have been Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad States. Uttamchand Gandhi, alias Ota Gandhi, my grandfather, ~~must have been a man of principle. State intrigues~~ compelled him to leave Porbandar, where he was Diwan, and to seek refuge in Junagadh. There he saluted the Nawab with the left hand. Someone, noticing the apparent discourtesy, asked for an explanation, which was given thus: 'The right hand is already pledged to Porbandar.'

Ota Gandhi married a second time, having lost his first ~~wife. He~~ had four sons by his first wife and two by his second wife. ~~I do not think that in my childhood I ever felt or knew that these sons of Ota Gandhi were not all of the same mother~~. The fifth of these six brothers was Karamchand Gandhi, alias Kaba Gandhi, and the sixth was Tulsidas Gandhi. Both these brothers were Prime Ministers in Porbandar, one after the other. Kaba Gandhi was my father. ~~He was a member of the Rajasthanik~~ Court. It is now extinct, but in those days it was a very influential body for settling disputes between the chiefs and ~~their fellow clansmen.~~ He was for some time Prime Minister in Rajkot and then in Vankaner. ~~He was a pensioner of the Rajkot State when he died.~~

Kaba Gandhi married four times in succession, having lost his wife each time by death. ~~He had two daughters by his first and second marriages~~. His last wife, Putlibai, bore him a daughter and three sons, I being the youngest.

My father was ~~a lover of his clan,~~ truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered. To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures. ~~For he married for the fourth time when he was over forty~~. But he was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict impartiality ~~in his family as well as outside~~. His loyalty to the State was well known. An Assistant Political Agent spoke insultingly of the Rajkot Thakore Saheb, his chief, and he stood up to the insult. The Agent was angry and asked Kaba Gandhi to apologize. This he

connected with our subject-matter. One part of South Africa is under the Portuguese, and the rest under the British. The territory under the Portuguese is called Delagoa Bay, and this is the first South African port for steamers from India. As we proceed further south, we come to Natal, the first British Colony. Its chief sea-port is called Port Natal, but we know it as Durban, under which name it is generally known all over South Africa. Durban is the largest city in Natal. The capital is Pietermaritzburg, situated inland at a distance of about sixty miles from Durban and at a height of about two thousand feet above sea-level. The climate of Durban is somewhat like that of Bombay, although rather colder. If we proceed further inland beyond Natal we reach the Transvaal, whose mines supply the world with the largest amount of gold. Some years ago diamond mines were also discovered in one of which was the world's largest diamond. The *Cullinan*, so called after the name of the proprietor of the mine, weighed over 3,000 carats, or over 1¼ lb. avoirdupois, while the *Kohinoor* now weighs about 100 carats and the *Orloff*, one of the Russian crown jewels, about 200 carats.

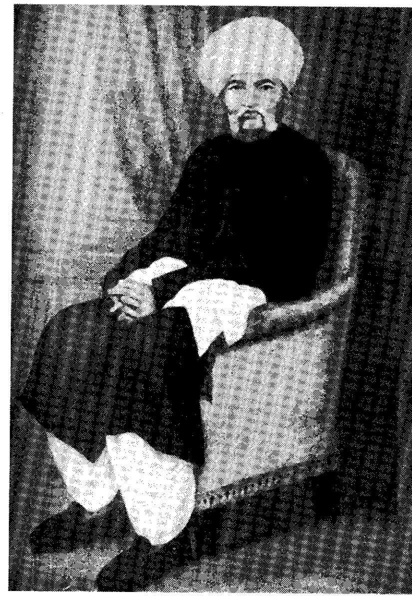
But though Johannesburg is the centre of the gold-mining industry and has diamond mines in the neighbourhood, it is not the official capital of the Transvaal. The capital is Pretoria, at a distance of about thirty-six miles from Johannesburg. In Pretoria one chiefly finds officials and politicians and the population drawn by them. It is therefore a comparatively quiet place, while Johannesburg is full of bustle. As a visitor from a quiet village, or for the matter of that a small town in India, to Bombay, would be confounded with the din and roar of the city, even so would a visitor from Pretoria be affected with Johannesburg. It would be no exaggeration to say that the citizens of Johannesburg do not walk but seem as if they ran. No one has the leisure to look at any one else, and every one is apparently engrossed in thinking how to amass the maximum wealth in the minimum of time! If leaving the Transvaal we travel further inland towards the West, we come to Orange Free State or Orangia. Its capital is Bloemfontein, a very quiet and small town.

MAHENDRA MEGHANI edited *Milap* monthly, an equivalent of the *Reader's Digest* in Gujarati language from 1950 to 1978. Anything that he enjoys reading from books and periodicals, he loves to condense and/or translate into Gujarati and, less frequently from Gujarati into English. He has thus produced a few translations, abridgements and anthologies in both languages. When *Milap* closed down, he had the urge to travel to various places, mainly in his home state Gujarat, and gave readings from books before small groups or large in homes and educational institutions. Thus the magazine acquired an oral rather than a printed form.

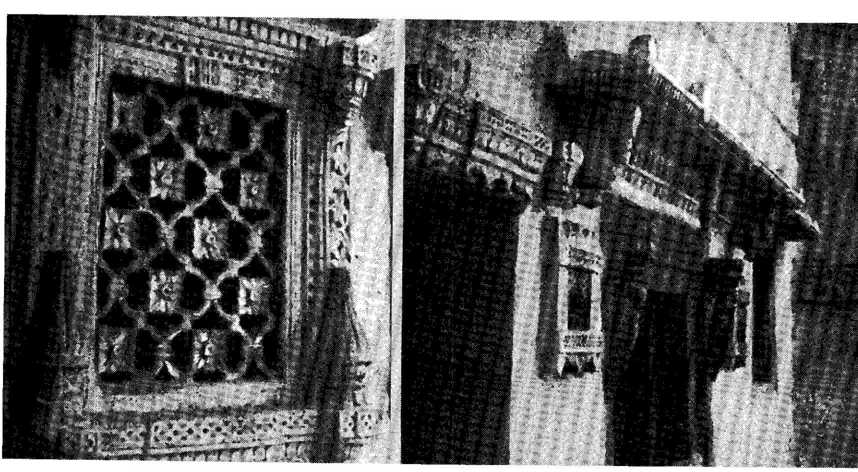
Beginning from 1967 he has been undertaking several trips abroad to display Indian books. The biggest of this was in 1969, the Gandhi centenary year, when his brother-colleague Jayant Meghani and he took turns to spend almost the whole year to put up in a score of countries in all continents week-long displays of 400 Indian books in English, entitled *Discovering India Book Exhibition*. This was undertaken under the auspices of Lokmilap Trust, a non-profit organization, and under the sponsorship of a committee of internationally known eminent Indians, headed by Jai Prakash Narayan. In subsequent years Lokmilap sent out several book-exhibitions to Europe and America, including displays at the Frankfurt Book Fair and the International Children's Book Fair, Bologna. Each of these ventures was financed through the sale of books abroad.



Mother Putlibai



Father Karamchand Gandhi



Home in Porbandar


At the age of 7

At the age of 14



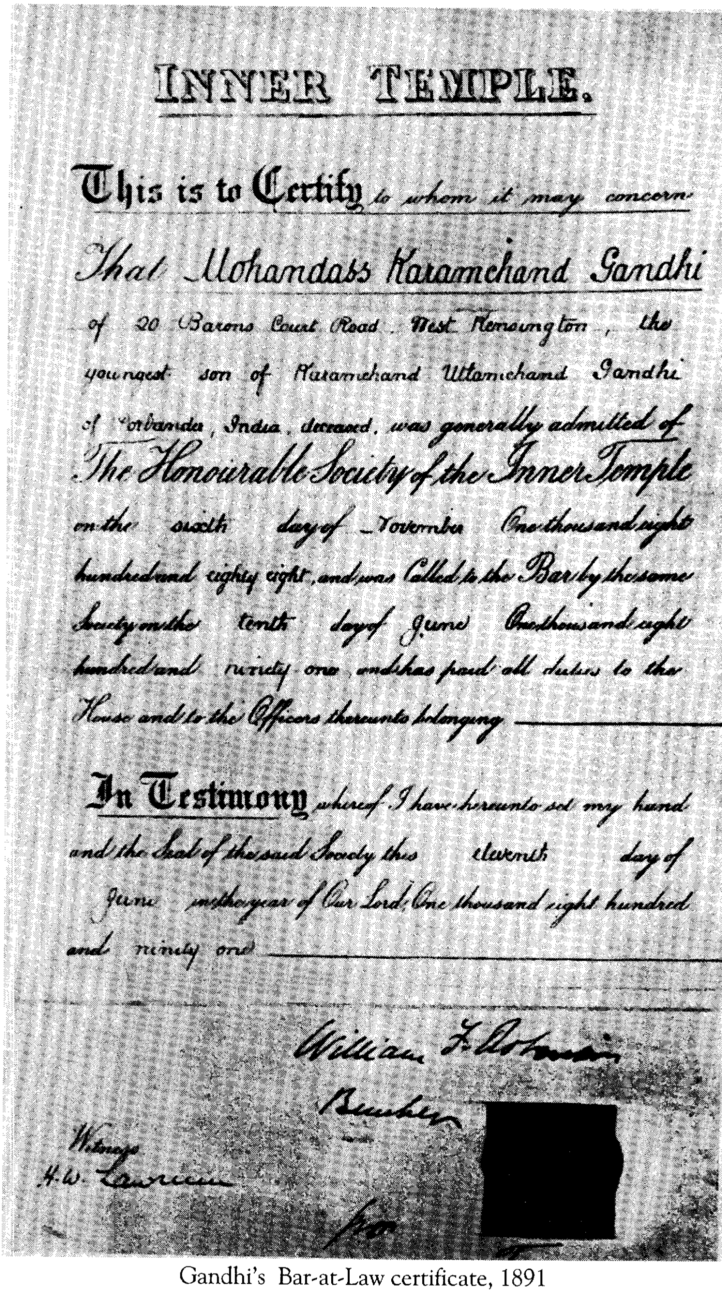

As a law student in London



Gandhi's first London home at 20 Baron's Court Road, West Kensington



With members of the Vegetarian Society, London, 1890



INNER TEMPLE.

This is to Certify to whom it may concern

That Mohandass Karamchand Gandhi of 20 Barons Court Road West Kensington, the youngest son of Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi of Porbandar, India, deceased, was generally admitted of The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple on the sixth day of November One thousand eight hundred and eighty eight, and was Called to the Bar by the same Society on the tenth day of June One thousand eight hundred and ninety one and has paid all duties to the House and to the Officers thereunto belonging

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and the Seal of the said Society this eleventh day of June in the year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred and ninety one

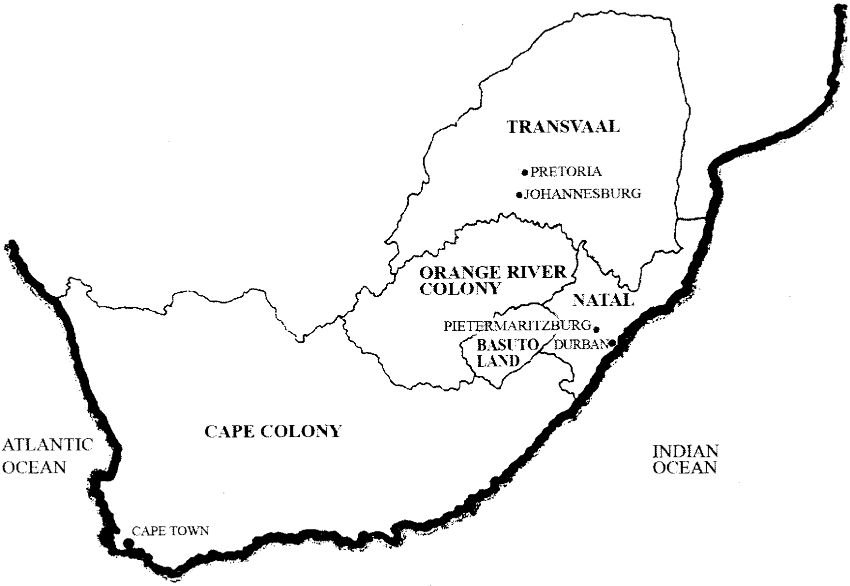
William F. Robinson

Bencher

Witness
H.W. Lawrence

[redacted]

Gandhi's Bar-at-Law certificate, 1891



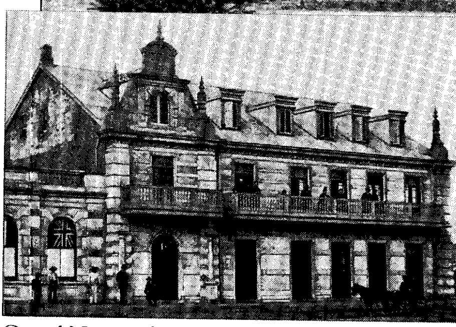
South Africa in 1900



West Street in 1895. Dada Abdulla & Co. was situated at 427 West Street, Durban



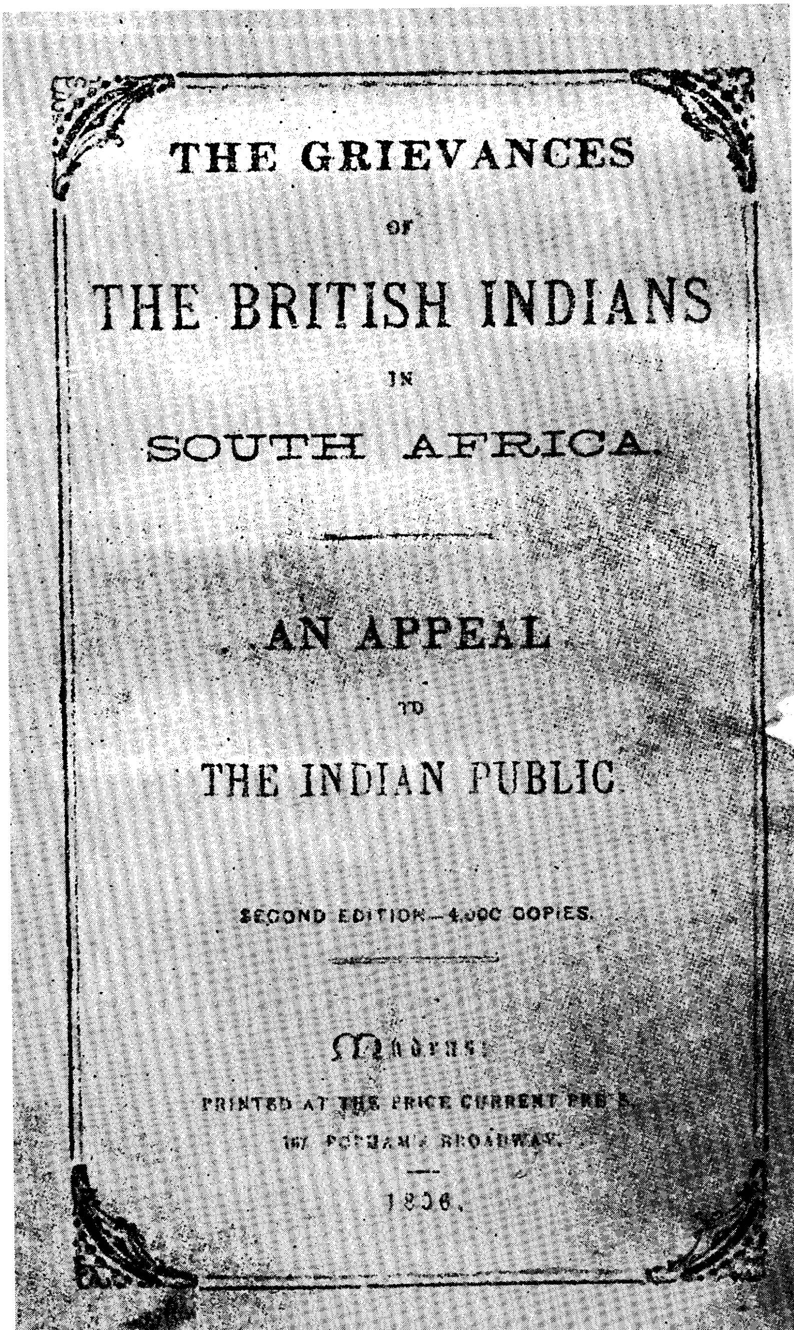
Maritzburg Railway Station



Grand National Hotel



Leaders of Natal Indian Congress


THE GRIEVANCES

OF

THE BRITISH INDIANS

IN

SOUTH AFRICA.

AN APPEAL

TO

THE INDIAN PUBLIC.

SECOND EDITION—4,000 COPIES.

Madras:

PRINTED AT THE PRICE CURRENT PRESS,

167 POPHAM'S BROADWAY.

1896.

The Green Pamphlet


Disturbances at Durban Harbor, 1896-97


(From left:) Gandhi's sister's son Gokuldas, son Manilal, Mrs. Gandhi, sons Ramdas and Harilal



Ferguson's Corner in 1899.
Gandhi's law office was located in
this building between 1895-96



During the early years of
legal practice, Johannesburg 1900



With the Indian Ambulance Corps during the Boer War of 1899-1900



Indian Opinion

ઇન્ડિઅન ઓપિનિઅન

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN ENGLISH AND GUJARATI

No. 42—Vol. XI. WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 22ND, 1913. *Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper* PRICE THREEPENCE

INDIANS ON STRIKE

ON Friday last the news reached us that a strike of indentured Indians employed at the coal mines near Newcastle, Natal, had commenced. The object of the strike is simply and solely to compel the Government, by peaceful methods, to fulfil the promise given to the Hon. Mr. Gokhale to abolish the £3 tax on ex-indentured Indians, their wives and children. This is their part of the passive resistance campaign, and as soon as the Government agree to bring in legislation with the desired object the strikers will return to work—this being a strike against the Government and not against employers.

Mr. Naidoo writes from Newcastle:—"Yesterday (the 14th instant) we went to the Railway barracks. Just as we were explaining the position to the people, someone went and fetched the Station-master who came straight to me and asked me what I was doing there. I told him that I had gone there to advise my people to strike work, pending the removal of the £3 tax. He then told me that I had no right there and that he was going to charge me with inciting to cause disturbance. He said the same thing to Messrs. Bhawani Dayal and Ramnaran. We said that he was quite welcome to do so. The poor ladies tried their utmost to get arrested but they could not succeed. They forced their way into the barracks and called upon all women and men to come out, thinking, if they did so, they also would be arrested, and they told the sergeant who came to arrest us that they were also advising these people. But the sergeant took no notice of them and we three were sent to the Charge Office and then to the Gaol where we passed the night in a clean cell but which was full of bugs. We were taken to the Court at nine o'clock the next morning. There were several merchants, also many other Indians, at the Court. We were charged under Sec 1 of the Ordinance of 1850, that is for inciting the people and obstructing and forcibly preventing peaceful servants from performing their duty. I pleaded guilty to inciting the people to strike but said that no force was used and that no obstruction whatsoever was caused to those who wished to go to work, and that I did counsel them not to go to work until the £3 tax was removed, and that I, as a passive resister, would never use force. The Magistrate, after going through the law-book, found us not guilty, but told the sergeant he had charged us under a wrong law and that he could charge us under the Immigration law; but, instead of doing so, they re-charged us for trespassing under certain Railway laws. I told the Magistrate that I could not understand how they could charge us for trespassing as we went to the Railway barracks by the invitation of one of the Indians who lived there and who is a railway servant. He (the Magistrate) said that I ought to have got permission from the station-master to go there. I said that there were many Indians who went there every day to see their friends and who did not get any permission. He sentenced us all to £2 fine. I said that we had no money and that we were not going to pay. The Magistrate said "alright you can go; I shall execute."

"We all went to the Fairleigh Colliery on the 15th. All men there have agreed to strike to-morrow. There are about 36 men on that mine. If these are not arrested to-morrow, I intend to take some of them with me to go to another mine. I am told that there are about 400 men there. I hope to get them all out. We are being well looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Lazarus. The poor lady is working from morning to night for us. The Johannesburg ladies have also sufficient to do. They go about with us as advisers."

The Movement Spreads

Mr. Ephraim writes under date the 16th instant:—

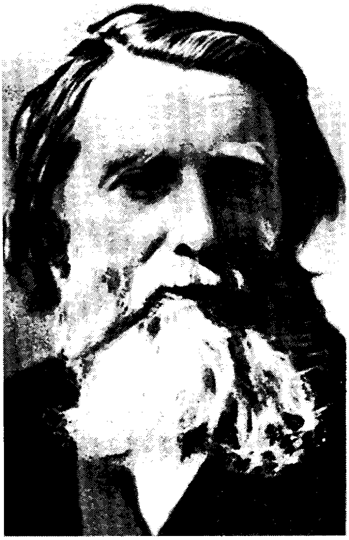
"Mr. Kallenbach arrived at Newcastle at 2 p.m. A meeting was summoned immediately. He referred to the £3 tax. He advised the people to be and remain strong.

"A meeting was also held in the compound of Fairleigh Colliery. About 78 struck work next day. Four were arrested and imprisoned for two weeks with hard labour."

"On Friday the movement spread beyond expectations and assistance became necessary to cope with the work. Mr. Polak left on a few minutes' notice for Newcastle by the mail train and arrived here on Saturday early in the morning. He immediately set to work and saw the Magistrate and the mine managers, assuring them that the Indians did not wish to create a disturbance, that no force would be used at any stage, that men on the mines and everywhere would be informed of the position and advised to strike work until a promise was given of the repeal of the £3 tax; that, as soon as the tax difficulty was settled, the men on strike would no longer be called upon to participate in the movement and that this step had become necessary as it was stated that the Natal employers of labour were averse to the tax being removed. Mr. Polak's advent has further strengthened the movement and at the same time calmed the situation considerably. All kinds of rumours were afloat about the intentions of the leaders. But now that the real situation is known the irritation caused among the Europeans by the suddenness of the strike has been largely removed. The other Collieries, too, have struck work. The appearance of the brave ladies simply acts like a charm and the men obey the advice given them without any great argument being required.

"It is stated that General Botha, who happened to be at Newcastle at the time the strike commenced, was interviewed by the mine managers on the situation."

An issue of *Indian Opinion*





John Ruskin and the book *Unto This Last*



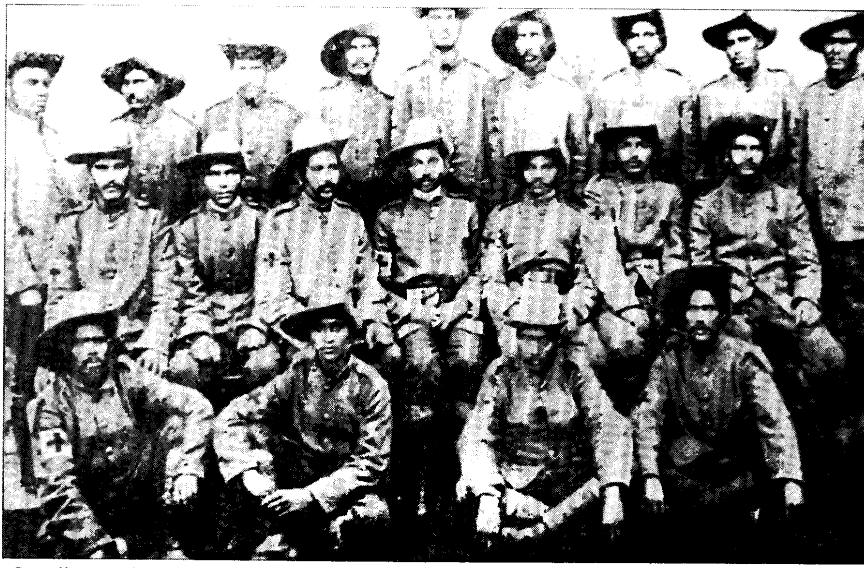
Gandhi at Phoenix Settlement with his colleagues


Maganlal Gandhi


Rustomji


Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia

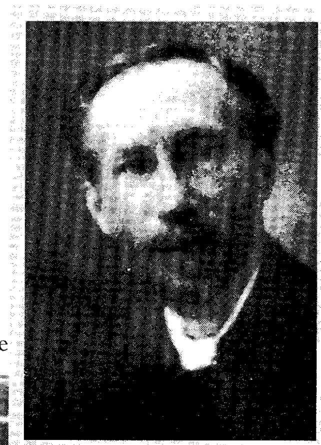

Sorabji Adajania



Gandhi as a leader of the Indian Stretcher-bearer Corps during the Zulu Rebellion, 1906



The Empire Theatre



Rev. Doke



At the residence of Rev. Doke in Johannesburg, after being assaulted by a Pathan



Albert West



Henry Polak



With Schlesin and Kallenbach before the hisotric march, 1913



Emily Hobhouse



Olive Schreiner

General Smuts





Gathering at the Hamidia Mosque: Johannesburg, 1908 to protest against the Registration Act



Registration Certificates being burnt outside Hamidia Mosque



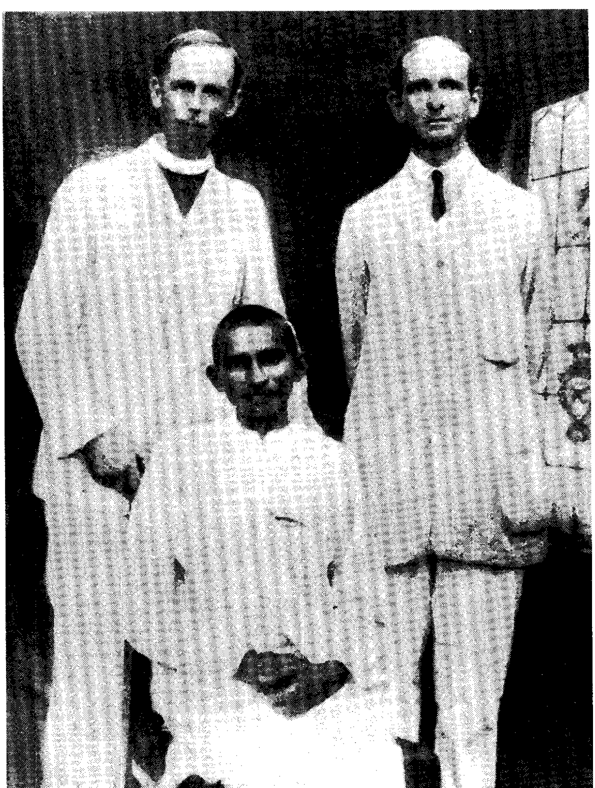
Tolstoy Farm



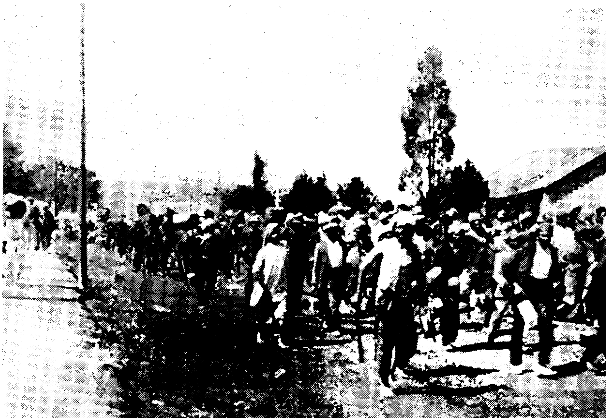
With the pioneer settlers at the Tolstoy Farm, 1910



At Gokhale's reception: Durban, 1912



With Andrews and Pearson





On march through Volksrust
crossing into the Transvaal



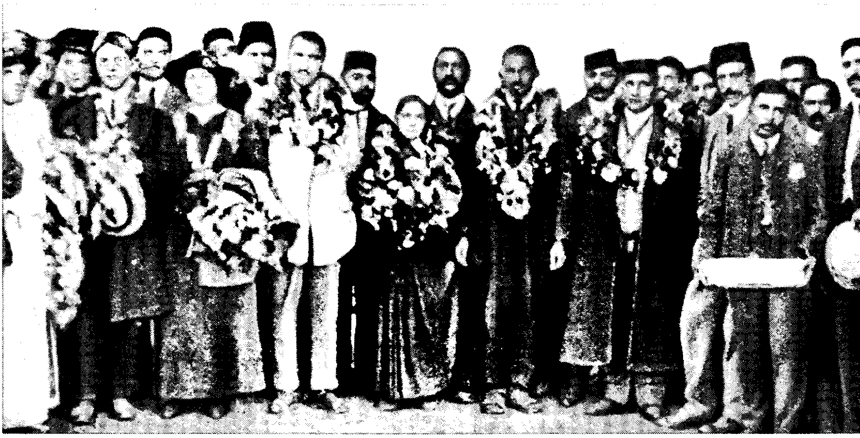
At Verulam, Natal, 1914



With Kasturbai, 1914



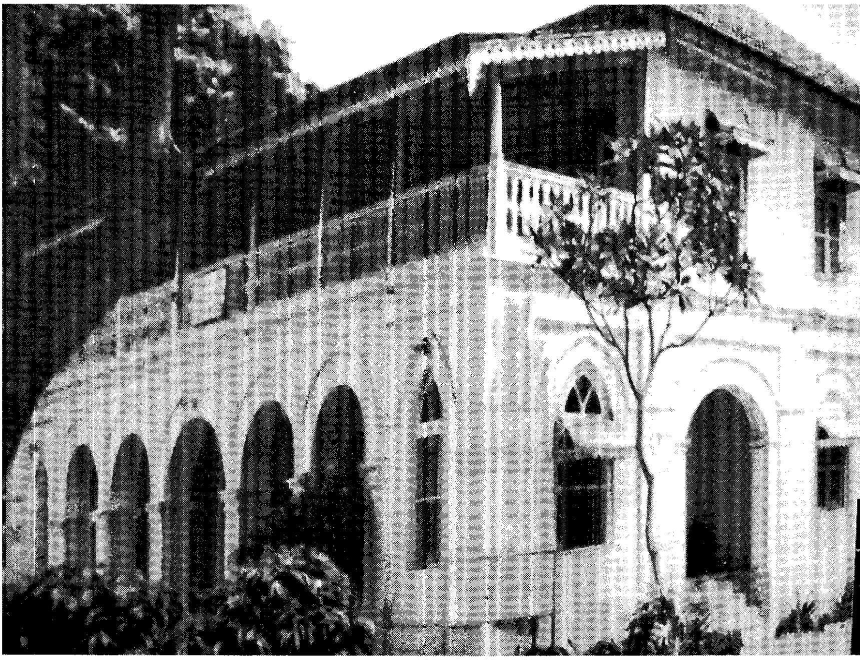
Change of dress during *satyagraha* in South Africa, 1914



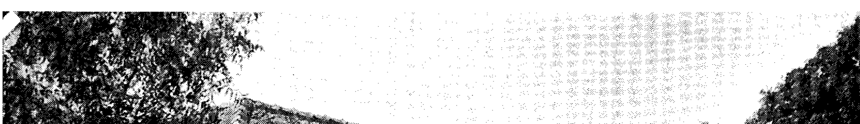
Farewell meeting at Durban, 1914



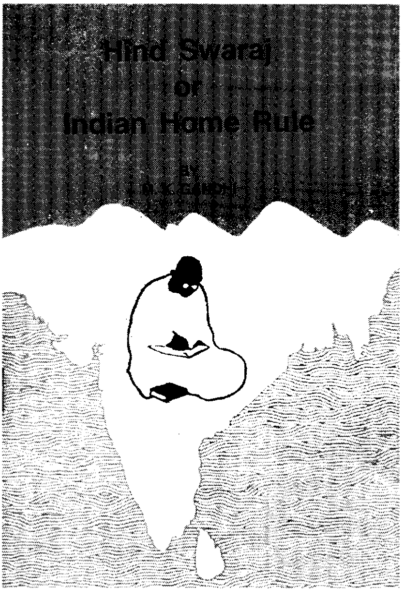
Coming Home, January 1915



Kochrab Ashram, Ahmedabad



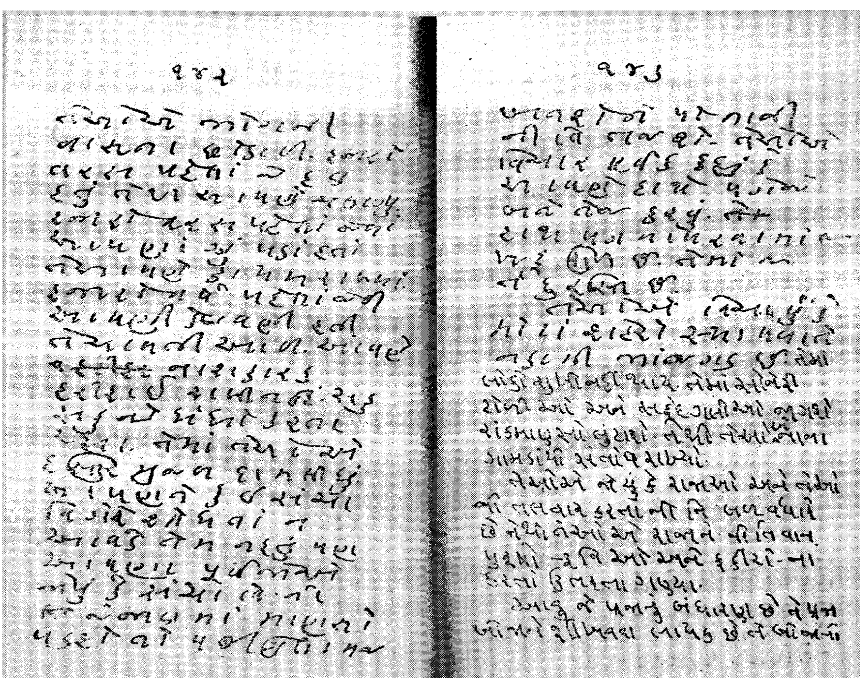
'Hriday Kunj': Gandhi's residential cottage at Sabarmati Ashram



Gandhi's first book



Periodicals conducted by Gandhi



Hind Swaraj in Gandhi's handwriting